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A VIEW FROM THE TEETH IN THE WAR OF THE FLEA: AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. ARMY TACTICS IN IRAQ

by

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December 2007

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This thesis examines the tactics used by the U.S. Army during 2004-2005 in Iraq. The central aim of this study is to understand why the Army chose tactics that were ill-suited to the conflict and why it took nearly three years to adapt to conditions in Iraq.

The Army applied doctrine that was familiar to it as an institution and was reluctant to accept tactics and changes in conduct that might violate its culture and doctrine. Tactics employed by many Army units were more akin to a counter-terror campaign rather than a counterinsurgency. A counter-terror operation is focused on the defeat of the enemy directly through kinetic means while a counterinsurgency focuses on defeating the enemy indirectly by interrupting the insurgents' ideology and base of support.

The greatest inhibitors to innovation in Iraq were commanders who resisted innovation because they did not understand the nature of the conflict in which they were engaged. They also were restricted by traditional Army culture.

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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I thank Professor Wirtz for his patience and input to facilitate this knuckle-dragger completing his degree.

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This thesis is dedicated to the Men of Gator Company 1-87 Infantry, without your support and dedication to the Army and the people of Iraq we would never have achieved all that we did. "Gator-done"

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   PURPOSE

This thesis examines why the U.S. military pursued tactics in Iraq that were not meeting the policy objectives set by the George W. Bush administration. The tactics used were not consistent with current counterinsurgency doctrine. The goal of this thesis is three-fold: (1) to establish the context that U.S. military commanders were using to formulate strategy from 2004-2005; (2) to examine the reasons why military commanders chose tactics that were ill-suited to the battle space; and (3) to establish some conclusions about the way the U.S. Army has adapted its doctrine to fight in Iraq and the potential effects for future operations. The thesis identifies the factors that influenced tactical commanders' decision making and tactical planning and describes how strategy is translated into tactics on the ground in a conflict. The thesis identifies nuances about military organizations and provides insight for policy makers and military commanders into how policy is interpreted and translated into action.

B.   IMPORTANCE

The idea that a gap exists between policy makers and the tactics used to achieve policy objectives is not new. It is well understood that actions by tactical units can negatively effect the accomplishment of policy objectives; what is not understood is why tactical commanders conduct themselves in a manner that does not contribute to achieving the goals of policy makers. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature in regards to the U.S. Army's lack of success in the Iraq War. This thesis relies on first-hand experience in Iraq and applicable theory to explain these issues and to provide learning points for future counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.

C.   LITERATURE REVIEW

There are three literatures used in this study: (1) specific information on the policies, strategy and conduct of the War in Iraq; (2) writings on the conduct of counter-insurgency warfare; (3) literature that provides insight into how military organizations or organizations in general "learn" and make decisions.

1.   General Literature on Iraq Policies and Strategy

There is little debate about the policies and objectives of the U.S. government in Iraq during the period of 2005-2006. The policies are set forth clearly through the National Defense Strategy (2005),[1] National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism 2006 and the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq (2005).[2] A debate exists, however, about whether or not these objectives were achievable by the U.S. military (as the lead organization), whether these objectives were sufficiently important to justify the expenditure of American blood and treasure on, and why these policies have not achieved their intended goal of bringing freedom and democracy, or at a minimum stability and security, to Iraq.

Michael Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor authors of *Cobra II*,[3] and Robert Brigham author of *Is Iraq another Vietnam*[4] blame the Bush administration for failing to bring stability to Iraq. Specific reasons for this failure were attributed to a lack of intelligence, a lack of synergy within and between intelligence agencies, a lack of planning for winning the peace after the initial invasion, the bellicosity of the Bush administration,[5] and a misguided belief in the preeminence and appeal of the uniquely American version of democracy and capitalism.[6] While this criticism is relevant, it is not

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[1] *National Defense Strategy*, Department of Defense, Washington, DC, March 2005.

[2] *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, National Security Council, Washington, DC, November 2005.

[3] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor*, Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006).

[4] Robert K. Brigham, *Is Iraq Another Vietnam*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Perseus Books Group, 2006).

[5] Brigham, 498.

[6] Brigham, 1-3.

sufficient to explain the military's inability to facilitate the necessary first steps in the process of nation building. In other words, these critics cannot explain why the military failed to provide security and some moderate level of stability to facilitate the economic and political reforms that will ultimately provide lasting change. Although the utility of using the U.S. military to promote nation building is not universally recognized, most observers agree that there is a role for the military in nation building and that it cannot be accomplished through purely diplomatic means. Most observers also recognize that the U.S. military is the only organization that has the infrastructure and capability to undertake such an endeavor.

The U.S. military is a necessary element of an effective nation-building mission and must be able to conduct such operations. Most literature has tended to focus the lack of success at the highest levels of the U.S. executive branch or the Department of Defense, while little attention is given to the issues within the Department of Defense of how effective nation building or Counterinsurgency Operations is conducted by field units. Today, there is a doctrinal debate within the U.S. Army on how to conduct a counterinsurgency strategy and how to transition from high-intensity conflict to a nation-building or counterinsurgency strategy.[7]

Why does the U.S. military seem unable to accomplish nation building or stability and support objectives (recognizing, of course, that the military is not the sole solution but is a necessary first step in facilitating the conditions to execute stability operations)? To answer this question this study focuses on the organization that is currently carrying the heaviest load of the effort in Iraq, which is the U.S. Army.

John Nagl's work provides some of the most relevant insights into the ability of the U.S. Army to respond to the changing nature of warfare.[8] In *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, he provides a comparative analysis of the British and American armies in counterinsurgency conflicts in Malaya and Vietnam. The intent of the book is to demonstrate which of the armies were able to adapt to the challenges of the conflict in which it was engaged. His conclusion is that the British Army was better structured and

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[7] Gordon and Trainor, 447.

[8] John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

politically enabled to be more of learning organization than the American Army and was thus able to change to meet the specific challenges of the counterinsurgency fight in Malaya. Conversely, the U.S. Army was rigid in its doctrine, and tactics. The organization was unwilling to change to meet the specific challenges of the Vietnam conflict. Nagl's work suggests that the U.S. Army would have a tough time adapting to meet the exigencies of the war in Iraq. Although his analysis covers up until the early 1990s, the problems he identifies are similar to problems the U.S. Army is experiencing in Iraq. According to Nagl, "the American approach is an over-weaning reliance on technology, a faith in the uniqueness and the moral mission of the United States, and a remarkable aversion to the use of unconventional tactics."[9] This study builds upon Nagl's analysis by determining the level of institutional learning that has occurred within the U.S. Army as evidenced by the selection of tactics employed in Iraq in 2004-2005.

To provide this insight into the context in which the U.S. Army experienced or perceived the Iraq War in the summer of 2005, I will largely draw from my personal experience as a Company Commander for A CO (Company), 1 BCT (Brigade Combat Team), 10th Mountain Division, which deployed to Iraq from August of 2005 to August of 2006. I also draw from articles in military journals to support my description of the conflict and how that related to the accepted doctrine and tactics employed by the U.S. Army.

2.   Literature on Counter-insurgency Warfare

There are two overall strategies for winning a counterinsurgency engagement. First, is the "strong hand" approach, which would entail complete domination of a local population and the terrain to deny the insurgents' ability to influence the population or gain any tactical advantage. Second, is the "winning the hearts and minds" of the population strategy or "soft hand" approach. The "strong hand" method, although recognized as being effective in the past, is not a method that in today's environment of instant media attention and global interconnectedness would be condoned by the international community. It also does not mesh with the U.S. goals of bringing freedom

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[9] Nagl, 43-44.

and democracy to the world.[10] The "soft hand" approach has many supporters in the field of counterinsurgency warfare. It is the basis of the recently published FM 3-24 Joint "Counterinsurgency" Manual.[11] In all recent works, there seems little debate about how a counterinsurgency should be conducted to be successful. The strategy can be summed up in the phrase, "to defeat an insurgency you have to know who the insurgents are and to find that out, you have to win and keep the support of the people."[12] This thesis tests the prescriptions of FM 3-24 to determine if the period from 2004 to 2005 saw evidence of a U.S. Army that had "learned" counterinsurgency doctrine. It also might be possible to discover if the organization was struggling to redefine itself in light of the experience of the Iraq war.

The sources used in this study were chosen because they provide specific insight into the tactical employment of a counterinsurgency strategy, rather than those that approach the subject from the strategic level of analysis. These sources have the most utility in providing points of comparison in how theorists have stated counterinsurgency tactics should be employed as compared with how it was actually accomplished. The works used here tend to provide tactical level prescriptions and are unified in the theory that counterinsurgency conflicts are essentially won or lost at the small unit level. Many of the widely accepted axioms of today are ideas that are espoused by these authors, such as the idea of the "strategic corporal" or the "ink spot approach."

3.   Literature on Decision Making

There is a wealth of information on decision making behavior. Two specific theories -- the Organizational Behavior Model and Prospect Theory -- provide different yet relevant insights into how and why decisions are made by the tactical commanders.

The Organizational Behavior Model posits that organizations, and the leaders within them, operate and perform analysis based on adopted rules, norms, and routines.

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[10] Nagl, 27-28.

[11] Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* Headquarters Department of the Army and Marine Corps, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[12] Nagl, xiii.

Within the military these are recognized as doctrine, SOPs (standard operating procedures), and TTPs (tactics, techniques, and procedures). Large organizations are typically prone to satisficing: selecting the first alternative that is acceptable, not necessarily the best solution. Additionally, success in this system will often be based on compliance with SOPs rather than the accomplishment of overall national objectives. When faced with a need to change, organizations are likely to define problems and solutions within the construct of the procedures that they are used to rather then trying to change the organization. They will try to solve new problems with old ideas or procedures.

Organizational behavior also can be viewed as an output of the organization that performs it.[13] This theory provides internal insight into why the military has had an enduring focus on the "offense" as the means to victory in conflict, even though counterinsurgency warfare is defensively oriented.

Prospect Theory posits that the frame of reference or the situation in which the individual or group experiences an event effects the decision making process. It proposes that people are more likely to be risk averse when things are perceived as going well and to be risk acceptant when things are perceived to be going poorly.[14] This theory provides an external perspective into why the military was willing to accept risks in the initial stages of the war but as time went on and gains were made, ground forces became more risk averse. This risk aversion translated into garrison warfare: troops massed in large bases to ensure greater protection and safety but at the loss of influence in the communities they are supposed to be protecting. Current events surrounding the "Anbar Awakening" seem to corroborate Prospect Theory as an explanatory theory for decision making. Riskier tactics were adopted only when the province was deemed lost to the enemy.

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[13] Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, second edition, (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 1999), 152.

[14] Jack Levy, "Application of Prospect Theory to Political Science*,*" *Synthese*. Dordrecht: Vol. 135, Iss. 2 (May 2003): 215.

D.   METHODOLOGY

This thesis first describes current Army doctrine as set forth in the recently published joint counterinsurgency manual to provide a description of how counterinsurgency should be conducted and to identify primary themes from the document. It then identifies the policies and doctrine, or better described as a lack there of, that was in place in 2004 and how those policies were translated into a tactical plan or strategy. I will then compare the Army "doctrine" of 2004-2005 with the themes established from FM 3-24 and identify the specific ways that our approach was flawed. Prospect theory and the Organizational theories will then be used to explain what motivates and influences commanders when it comes to translating policy into action. By utilizing empirical as well normative evidence to explain how the Army adapted to the conflict in Iraq this study will provide a more robust answer to how and why the Army adapts.

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II.   COIN DOCTRINE AS IT EXISTS TODAY

This study explains why tactical level leaders in Iraq were not able to accomplish the strategic goals set forth by the Bush Administration. Specifically, the Army failed to foster a security situation necessary to pursue peaceful political change in Iraq. The Army was unsuccessful because it did not have a coherent and universally accepted understanding of counterinsurgency and it utilized inappropriate tactics and doctrine once the United States had defeated the regime of Saddam Hussein. This is evidenced by Army units choosing, training, and executing ineffective or counter-productive tactics. This chapter will establish what counterinsurgency should be. To accomplish this, portions of FM 3-24 are described to identify the central themes of effective counterinsurgency doctrine at the tactical level.[15]   FM 3-24 uniquely captures the significant aspects of the tactical execution of counterinsurgency that must be understood in order for a counterinsurgent to be successful. These central themes have relevance both in terms of the methods employed by tactical units and their overall influence on the tactical situation.

FM 3-24 is the basis of currently accepted and appropriate counterinsurgency doctrine. FM 3-24 synthesizes multiple facets of counterinsurgency theory, practice (both past and present), and complimentary social science literature and thought. It is one of the only military manuals to both present a method for accomplishing a mission assigned and simultaneously capturing the significant debates within the subject. It presents the issues of debate (paradoxes) without distracting from the clarity of the methods promoted. This is significant for tactical level leaders. Most military doctrine to date has been presented in a, "one answer to one identified problem set" approach (SOPs, tactical manuals, Battle Drills). Doctrine such as FM 3-24, reinforces the central tenets of a transformed military that is able to learn "how" to think about solutions for a problem as opposed to being given "what" to think. Most counterinsurgency literature and theory, according to David Galula, is written in such a way that, "very little is offered beyond

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[15] Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* Headquarters Department of the Army and Marine Corps, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

formulas."[16] FM 3-24 is clear in that it sets the framework for understanding insurgent warfare while stating that a "one size fits all solution" is not available or appropriate to counterinsurgency. This manual provides one of the most effective tools for tactical leaders to understand how to plan for and execute a counterinsurgency operation.

A. MILITARY COIN DOCTRINE

FM 3-24 is the current culmination of the joint Army and Marine efforts to provide a current and historically supported doctrine for counterinsurgency warfare. Before FM 3-24, no revision in doctrine had been made for over 40 years. Although it states clearly that its intended audience is leaders and planners at the battalion level and above, the majority of Chapter 1 and Appendix A have a wealth of information for commanders at the company and platoon level. These materials can provide the context for decision-making at the tactical level. The following sections address the information that can provide insights into the Army's current view of tactical counterinsurgency doctrine: 1) Principles derived from past insurgencies; 2) Imperatives based on current Counterinsurgency Operations; and 3) Appendix A (Kilcullen's 28 Articles[17]).

1. Principles Derived from Past Insurgencies

This section of FM 3-24 provides the historical themes of counterinsurgency. Although they are important and can influence tactical level decisions, they are primarily intended to provide the framework for understanding how effective counterinsurgency doctrine will lead to political success. They can be broken down into principles that apply to goal setting and methods for counterinsurgent forces.

Counterinsurgency goals include establishing legitimacy to accomplish political aims. Political goals are paramount to any lasting success in a counterinsurgency. FM 3-24 acknowledges, and it is central to an appropriate understanding of a counterinsurgency, that a unified effort towards accomplishing political aims is the

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[16] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, (West Port, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), xiii.

[17] David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Article, Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, 3 (May-June 2006), 1-11.

primary objective of a counterinsurgency. The greatest contributing factor to success is establishing and sustaining the legitimacy of the counterinsurgent forces. This can only occur if there is unity of effort within the political and military arms of a counterinsurgent force. The counterinsurgent's right to be there has to be accepted by the local population and this must be sustained by quickly transitioning responsibility to the host nation government. A central aspect behind the legitimacy of any actor involved in a counterinsurgency is the degree of consent or coercion of the governed that is required to facilitate control of the population. Evaluation of this aspect is the best way to determine whether a population believes it is represented by or oppressed by those who have influence over them. In a counterinsurgency, the goal should always be to facilitate the rapid transition of control by the counterinsurgent to the local government and security apparatus.

The rest of the principles in this section of FM 3-24 describe the way that the counterinsurgent should frame understanding of the enemy and the specific nature of a counterinsurgency environment. Specifically, commanders conducting counterinsurgency and nation building must understand the unique role of the non-combatants and local populations. Commanders conducting counterinsurgency must understand the environment in which they operate, the nature and tactics of the enemy elements, and how the counterinsurgent can effectively interdict the enemy's activities. The support and trust of locals will be the key to a successful counterinsurgency. Local support is attained through providing security and establishing the rule of law thus breaking the link between the insurgent and his base of support (the population). Once the insurgent does not have the ability to intimidate or influence the local population, locals are inclined to provide the intelligence to the counterinsurgent that ultimately leads to the elimination of the insurgent forces. FM 3-24 also warns that insurgencies are long-term in nature and must be approached with long-term and lasting solutions.

2. Imperatives of COIN Operations

The Imperative section of FM 3-24 provides useful insights into how counterinsurgency operations should be conducted based on recent experiences of the

military. Although these imperatives can be read as being specific to the tactical level or level of execution, they are most applicable as a framework for the operational level of a counterinsurgency. They can help explain how actions on the ground should proceed to accomplish the goals set forth in the operational design.

The imperatives section in FM 3-24 describes counterinsurgency operations as: 1) the need to use measured force; 2) empower the lowest levels; 3) learn and adapt; 4) support the host nation; and 5) manage expectations. All of these imperatives can influence tactical operations: e.g., operations undertaken by platoons and companies and those responsible for managing multiple tactical elements at the battalion level and above. These imperatives can be best used by those who are responsible for managing multiple tactical elements because they must create the conditions that will enable overall success. These imperatives also can be read as warnings to mid-level tactical commanders because they constitute the basis of the most common mistakes made in past conflicts.

3.   Kilcullen's 28 Articles (Appendix A of FM 3-24)

This section is based on David Kilcullen's, *28 Articles, Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency.*[18] These articles are unique in that they provide a specific "how to guide" to conduct a counterinsurgency. A problem with most counterinsurgency theory and doctrine is that it is written in such a way that makes it difficult to apply at the tactical level. The ultimate success of a counterinsurgency strategy rests with the local environment and population. Most theory captures this aspect of counterinsurgency, but fails to offer techniques that can be used by practitioners in the field. Kilcullen's work, however, provides time-phased advice on the conduct of counterinsurgency that begins with train-up of an element through the completion of a tour.

For the training period, there is specific direction on how to physically and mentally prepare a unit for the unique challenges of a counterinsurgency. Emphasis is placed on matching appropriate skill sets to positions. Kilcullen identifies the need to

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[18] Kilcullen, 1-11.

understand the environment, the need for adaptability in solving complex problems, and the inevitability that true solutions to problems will be discovered at the lowest levels of command.

Kilcullen reinforces the need for restraint and appropriate calculation in understanding events as they happen. This is a challenge to tactical leaders and soldiers in general because most are trained to react quickly and with little thought by using a pre-designed method (SOPs and battle drills). For the counterinsurgent to be effective they must not only understand the environment and enemy they are fighting but also understand the likely scenarios they will face. The distinctive nature of counterinsurgency is that, unlike maneuver warfare, the correct action to take is not always readily apparent and far more aspects of an environment and situation must be considered. Furthermore, the situation where a junior leader (team leader to platoon leader) will have to make a decision that could have strategic implications is much more likely than in maneuver warfare. For these reasons, the counterinsurgent must have a true understanding of whom, how, and why the enemy is fighting to identify the best counter-actions to achieve the initiative in battle.

The specific recommendations identified in the execution section of *28 Articles* are: (1) avoid knee jerk reactions, (2) prepare for handover from day one, (3) build trusted networks, (4) start easy, (5) seek early victories, (6) be prepared for setbacks, (7) remember the global audience, (8) engage the women, (9) beware the children, (10) exploit a single narrative, (11) local forces should mirror the enemy not ourselves, (12) practice armed civil affairs, (13) small is beautiful, (14) fight the enemy's strategy not his forces, and (15) build your own solutions. These all help to construct a useful way for U.S. forces to understand the context of their strengths and weaknesses as well as the enemy's strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, they provide a useful picture of how operations will occur in a counterinsurgency.

B.   CENTRAL THEMES OF COIN

The successful execution of tactics can be grouped into three categories of analysis: 1) evaluation of the counterinsurgent; 2) evaluation of the enemy; and 3)

evaluation of the nature of the likely conflict. As Sun Tzu provided, "know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."[19] This phrase does not capture the essence of how the nature of a conflict might impact the tactics or methods employed in battle. Sun Tzu also advised that, "what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."[20] Clausewitz provided, " Now, the first, the grandest, and most decisive act of judgment which the Statesman and General exercise is rightly to understand in this respect the War in which he engages, not to take it for something, or wish to make of it something, which by the nature of its relations it is impossible for it to be."[21] Thus, victory in a conflict requires properly understanding yourself, your enemy, and the fight you will encounter.

In light of these timeless directives concerning victory in war, this study has identified four central themes of a counterinsurgency: theme #1, unity of effort and clarity of purpose are essential in a counterinsurgency; theme #2, the counterinsurgent must fight the enemy's ideology and methods, not the enemy directly; theme #3, The counterinsurgent has to foster the legitimacy of the local government; and theme #4 all concerned need to recognize that counterinsurgency takes time and requires adaptability for success.

1.   Theme #1

Unity of effort and clarity of purpose are essential in a counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency doctrine emphasizes the statesman and the military commander must be united in their vision of success.[22] Recognizing that military success will merely set the stage for political success, military and political leaders of the counterinsurgency and the host-nation government must have clarity of motivation and purpose to align political programs with the tactical methods employed to achieve them. Additionally, unifying

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[19] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War,* translated by Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 84.

[20] Sun Tzu, 77.

[21] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 121.

[22] Galula, 61-63.

doctrine must exist and be known by all practitioners of a counterinsurgency. Without clarity of purpose and method, confusion and failure are certain.

Being able to apply one's assets is central to success in any managerial endeavor. It is not unique to the military nor is it unique within a counterinsurgency. Debate exists within military circles over to what degree counterinsurgency warfare differs from high-intensity conflict or maneuver warfare. The exact nature of the debate currently identifies counterinsurgency as one variation of Full-Spectrum Operations.[23] Full-Spectrum Operations is the Army's doctrinal definition of how the Army fights or the form it will take and tactics used. Counterinsurgency is then a variation that combines offensive, defensive, stability, or support in unique ways, depending on the local conditions and parameters of success.[24] Although FM 3-24, in addition to other Army manuals, names counterinsurgency as a subset variation of Full Spectrum Operations, it has deemed it necessary to define it on its own and thus a manual has been dedicated to understanding and executing it effectively. Debate also exists as to whether or not the same individual leaders who have demonstrated success in maneuver warfare also can be successful in a counterinsurgency. Most believe that with defined training, a good leader and unit can be effective in either conflict environment. All agree that successful execution of a counterinsurgency requires effective leaders and units that have been trained to operate in that specific environment. Furthermore, operating effectively in a counterinsurgency is not a core proficiency that the Army has developed and sustained over the years. On the contrary, it has actively fought against incorporating the mission of stability operations into the Army core missions.[25]

All doctrine recognizes that economic and political developments are the ultimate metrics of success in a counterinsurgency.[26] Security just sets the conditions for success to occur. Whether it is the statesman, military leader, or host-government official who is

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[23] FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* 34.

[24] Field Manual 3.0, *Operations*, Headquarters Department of the Army, Washington D.C., June 2001, 150.

[25] Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 17.

[26] Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 272.

administrating these functions, they must perform as an extension of a unified plan and effort. It is readily accepted that counterinsurgent forces will have to shoulder the burden of initiating and setting the stage for economic and political programs. There is disagreement at what point and what are the events or triggers that signal the transition to a host-government. Additionally, there is no consensus as to what level of management should hold the "purse strings" when it comes to providing money at the local level. This creates a problem for defining success for military units and in assigning assets to the appropriate organizations to use them. If done incorrectly or inefficiently, the benefits of having a large amount of capital and capability are not realized in the conflict.[27]

2.   Theme #2

The counterinsurgent must fight the enemy's ideology and methods, not the enemy directly. Unlike warfare between two conventional armies, an insurgency is a method that is used by an opponent that recognizes it cannot defeat the counterinsurgent's force in a straight up fight. As Kilcullen states, "you (the counterinsurgent) are being sent in because the insurgents, at their strongest, can defeat anything weaker than you."[28] As a result, the insurgent will choose a method of conflict meant to weaken the larger and more capable force over a long period of time. The insurgent maintains the initiative in a conflict by sustaining support for its cause from the local population. Furthermore, insurgents typically have a clearer picture of how their opponents are organized and operate; conventional militaries tend to dismiss insurgents as undisciplined amateurs.

A central theme repeated in counterinsurgency theory and doctrine is the idea that insurgents will hide in plain sight. The insurgents do not have to operate from remote locations if they can gain at least the acquiescence, or even better, the support of a local population. The insurgent maintains this support by undercutting the legitimacy of the local government, the counterinsurgent force, or both. In addition, the insurgent's central

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[27] Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace, Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002), 332.

[28] Kilcullen, 1.

aim is to use the counterinsurgent's actions against the local government. Over-reaction, aggressive actions, and collateral damage to local populations are the principle responses the insurgent attempts to provoke from the counterinsurgent.

Fighting a counterinsurgency is not akin to maneuver warfare. You cannot primarily focus on the destruction or elimination of the enemy elements as in maneuver warfare. The counterinsurgent will not have a military decisive target to strike to achieve its objective. Additionally, organizing a military unit to maximize fighting insurgent forces will hinder interaction with local populations. All of these aspects of a counterinsurgency support the idea that the counterinsurgent must be organized and operate in a manner distinctly different from maneuver warfare. Individual soldiers must have a greater understanding of the culture and language to operate in a counterinsurgency versus maneuver warfare. Initial responses by individual soldiers, are critical in effecting the terms of achieving success. Counterinsurgency operations must be restrained in their conduct and perception by local populations. Therefore, to reinforce the correct initial response requires specific training as it differs greatly from maneuver warfare training that would reinforce a more aggressive approach.

The greatest enemy of success in a counterinsurgency will be time. There is a finite amount of time counterinsurgency operations have to facilitate their long-term legitimacy. This affects the counterinsurgent in two ways: (1) time constraints limit the number of tasks that can be accomplished; and 2) without improvement, the opinion will turn against the counterinsurgent. As General Petraeus notes, there is only so long that a counterinsurgent can operate before an army of liberation turns into an army of occupation.[29] Many factors coalesce to create this negative turn in public opinion: the international media, political pressures from the counterinsurgent's home nation, and the activities of the insurgent. The best way for a unit to control negative local opinion is to transfer responsibilities and functions to a functioning local government.

Officers must understand who has influence in each area while visualizing how these individuals shape the overall situation. U.S. personnel must listen to and be willing

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[29] Lt. Gen David H. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq, *Military Review* 4 (January-February 2006), 2-12.

to react to the needs and wants of the local population. To understand the local perspective, officers have to be engaged with all aspects of a society and be open to various networks of influence.

3. Theme #3

Legitimacy is the most important factor in a counterinsurgency. FM 3-24 states that, "all governments rule through a combination of consent and coercion."[30] The less legitimate a regime, the more it must rely on coercive measures to maintain control.

Counterinsurgency operations or the local government can rely on intimidation (coercion) to achieve its goals for a short time. If coercion is used as the primary instrument then the host government and its outside supporters will be viewed as an oppressive (illegitimate) regime by the local population. U.S. forces must bolster the legitimacy of the host government. The goals of the host government and its outside supporters must be transparent and acceptable to the population. If measures taken by the counterinsurgent are interpreted as self-serving, unnecessary, or out of touch with the interests of the population as a whole, then the government is likely to be perceived as ill-legitimate. If legitimacy is never attained by a government, then it can never operate as an independent entity.

4. Theme #4

The U.S. government and military must have a long-term commitment and the U.S. military must be prepared to adapt to local conditions of the counterinsurgency if it is to succeed. Doctrine supports the idea that insurgencies can last a long time. They cannot be defeated quickly because they generally are supported by some segment of the local population.[31] This tenet is both a warning and planning guide for tactical commanders. Given the fact that the U.S. rotates its forces, every commander must understand their contribution to a counterinsurgency will be limited and should add to a

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[30] FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* 37.

[31] Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press Inc., 1980), 26.

long-term plan. This idea runs contrary to many aspects of the U.S. Army's approach to warfare and operations in general.

Adaptability facilitates long-term engagement because circumstances will change over time. Every counterinsurgency will differ in some ways and a single method will never remain effective even if initially successful. Insurgents will adapt to the tactics employed by friendly forces. Because rapid change is not possible or effective for the Army as a whole, adapting to the enemy and the environment must be promoted and supported at the lowest level possible. In the case of Iraq, the company level would be the most appropriate because commanders at this level enjoy some current experience but remain on a specific task.

C. CONCLUSION

Current counterinsurgency doctrine has existed for over 40 years. Although the nature of insurgencies and warfare has grown increasingly more complicated, the way to conduct counterinsurgency operations and, more importantly, the tenets or "way to think" behind the tactics has remained largely consistent. FM 3-24 is a valuable guide for the counterinsurgent at the tactical level because it incorporates the best of counterinsurgency theory with the best known methods for practical application. FM 3-24 gives specific insight into the tenets and best practices of tactical level execution of counterinsurgency doctrine. Furthermore, applying this theory with earlier tenets of success in warfare presents a new construct for visualizing success in warfare: Victory in a conflict requires properly understanding yourself, your enemy, and the fight you will encounter.

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III.   FIGHTING THE WAR WE GOT, NOT THE ONE WE WANTED

A.   DESCRIBING U.S. STRATEGY IN 2004-2005

This chapter identifies the strategy used by the U.S. Army in Iraq in 2004-2005. Specifically, the chapter recounts the strategy that guided one U.S. Army unit through its training and deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The experience of this unit was likely typical of other Army units. This approach can identify specific issues for analysis. What follows is this author's perception, as a Company Commander, of the doctrine and strategy that our unit employed in Iraq which is probably representative of other Army units at this time.

This chapter begins with a brief narrative containing significant events that occurred on my arrival to the 1-87 Infantry up to and including the early period of deployment to OIF and it will begin to explain why my unit's strategy could be better described as a counter-terror strategy rather than a counterinsurgent strategy. It will then identify the four factors that lead the Army to select a counter-terror strategy. Then it will describe in detail what a counter-terror strategy is at the tactical level of execution. Lastly, this chapter will identify three factors that contributed to the 1-87's inability to adapt its strategy after beginning combat operations.

1.   Narrative of 1-87 Infantry Prior to OIF

The purpose of this section is to provide some level of context for the reader to understand the environment in which the strategy and training was being formed for 1-87's deployment to OIF and to substantiate some conclusions about what Army doctrine was at this time. The tactics, strategy, and planning for operations in combat can, in some respects, be considered the easy part of warfare; it's the myriad of competing priorities and events that often present the toughest challenge to leaders in performing effectively.

I arrived at 1-87 Infantry, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, in June 2004 after assignment to a staff position in the 1 Brigade S3 (operations). The 1st Brigade, including 1-87, was just returning from a one year deployment to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom IV. During Operation Enduring Freedom, the brigade had been successful and 1-87 had received significant exposure to conducting unconventional operations. Each of its three rifle companies had been assigned to different small outposts along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Much of their operations were geared towards battling different insurgent groups while attempting to revitalize commerce and normal activities in the local towns. In comparison to most units in Iraq, the casualties had been less but 1-87 had three combat deaths during the deployment.

Battalion leadership believed they had conducted an effective counterinsurgency campaign and much effort was spent in identifying and understanding the best practices that evolved. In hind sight, however, this campaign was clearly more focused on defeating the terrorist influence in Afghanistan rather than defeating the growing insurgency. Therefore many of the tactics, techniques, procedures, and strategies that were employed were incorrectly assumed to be transferable from Afghanistan to Iraq.

For example, the tactic of having units live on large forward operating bases rather than disperse into communities was largely established in Afghanistan but was necessary in this operation due to the size of the assigned area of operation in relation to the amount of troops assigned to it and means of transportation. It was not possible in Operation Enduring Freedom to have soldiers live in communities as they needed to constantly be on the move to cover a larger area of operations.

The Brigade returned to Fort Drum, New York in May 2004, at that point it began immediately to execute its transformation into a new Unit of Action. I took command of the Headquarters Company 1-87 Infantry, joining two other new Company Commanders for the battalion, who had taken command of their rifle companies a few months before redeploying from Afghanistan.

The transformation was a complete overhaul of the typical structure of the unit by attempting to create organic relationships by attaching multiple types of units that usually only existed in a war time or training mission. That is, each battalion would have a

Forward Support Company, which included higher level supply, maintenance, and transportation assets and functions. These assets were previously only available at the brigade or higher levels. Now they would be permanently assigned at brigade and battalion levels. The most drastic change, at the battalion level, was the addition of two new companies, a Delta or anti-armor company and the Forward Support Company. The new configuration would also significantly change the structure of the Headquarters Company of each battalion, as it would now lose its Support Platoon, Anti-Tank Platoon, and all other support positions that better meshed with the FSB; i.e. cooks. These structural changes altered the Mission Essential Task List. Additionally, guidance from Division and higher levels was being pushed to mesh low-intensity conflict type missions and lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan with our traditional Task Lists.

The end result was a brigade completely turned up side down from its traditional operating structure, doctrinal understanding, and habitual relationships. Leaders at all levels also recognized that current doctrine guiding combat operations did not account for the type of operations that were occurring, namely a counterinsurgency operation. There was disagreement regarding what the unit and the Mission Essential Task List should look like as a finished product to account for this change of structure and tasks. Therefore, many changes enacted and tactics, techniques, and procedures enforced were a kind of shot gun blast of ideas hoping that at least one pellet would hit the mark. We knew we needed to change; we just were not sure exactly who should do it and how it should be done. With unsure, conflicting, or non-existent specified guidance coming from higher authority, the phrase of the day became "parallel planning."[32] Lower level units continued planning and executing implied tasks without being specifically told to do so from higher command; this process assumes there is a clear goal or end-state established and all units are clear on the expected method to achieve it.

These two assumptions were completely inaccurate. We were not sure of our focus, we didn't have the equipment to do what we thought we would likely be asked to do, and we knew our training may not be adequate to conduct the missions asked of us.

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[32] Field Manual 3-21.10, *The Infantry Rifle Company*, Headquarters Department of the Army, Washington D.C., July 2006, 2-4.

Therefore, each battalion level unit took the guidance from higher command and did their best to structure their unit and train what they thought they would have to do.

The four most influential positions in a battalion, is the Commander, Command Sergeant Major, Executive Officer, and Operations Officer. The next most influential positions are the Company Commanders. For the deployment to Operation Enduring Freedom IV, 1-87 Infantry had the same Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major who had taken command shortly before the deployment of the unit to Afghanistan. They remained in place throughout transformation and train-up for the deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom III. Two Company Commanders had taken command of rifle companies in the last couple of months of Operation Enduring Freedom IV. The Battalion Executive Officer and Operations Officer both left the Battalion upon return from Afghanistan. Also, just after redeployment of the Battalion, three new Company Commanders took command of the remaining companies within the Battalion; I was one of those Commanders. At the beginning of transformation and preparation for a future deployment to Iraq, 1-87 had a seasoned Commander and Command Sergeant Major with newly assigned personnel as the Battalion Executive Officer, Operations, and all Company Commander positions.

The effect of "fresh blood" combined with a good tactical understanding, from the top, of how to be effective in unconventional conflict was particularly useful. 1-87 was able to focus on the areas we needed to adapt to these new tasks and structure. Furthermore, we were receiving almost instantaneous information from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on effective tactics and techniques to utilize and train. The problems encountered were one of context. Sometimes we would receive conflicting techniques or information from different areas of operations and without a personal understanding of the conflict or the place it had occurred, it was difficult to decide what tactics, techniques, and procedures would or would not be effective. This conflicted with most leaders' typical method to prepare for a mission, which is to rely on known doctrine and an established context in which to understand military influence on a given conflict. But what happens if leaders can only decide what the ultimate end result should be but have no real idea of how to achieve it. Especially if one knows you don't have the assets or

personnel to do what's being asked or your commander believes whole heartedly in an inappropriate method (thus not giving a clear commander's intent)? This was often the "sense" of the situation from lower levels of command.

The reaction of Company Commanders was to concentrate more effort at the lowest levels of execution, focusing more on individual training that would support any course of action. This included marksmanship training, equipment training, vehicle training, language and cultural training, and any others that could ultimately prove beneficial in multiple combat environments. The problem then became one of resources and time available. We did not receive most of our major weapons systems and vehicles until the week before we began to patrol and there was an inadequate number of heavy machine guns and vehicles to use to train and prepare for our upcoming mission. Additionally, many leaders recognized the need for greater understanding of tasks such as language training and cultural awareness. The resources to support this training were not readily available for many units. The amount of tasks compared to the time available to train them and the ability of an average soldier to retain the new knowledge became highly unrealistic. Furthermore, many tasks were not practiced to a level of proficiency that would facilitate their successful performance in combat.

Although there were many challenges, 1-87 did everything possible to overcome them. To facilitate training unit's used simulators or contacted other units to address weapon shortfalls. We conducted vehicle training, but there was no way to replicate the difference between the way a regular HMWWV and an Up-Armored vehicle handles. We ultimately accomplished a limited and largely insufficient amount of training on Up-Armored vehicles in Kuwait. In addition, new systems were constantly being issued to units. As a result, soldiers and leaders knew they would be using unfamiliar systems once in Iraq. Most units did not go to Iraq during this period with full operational knowledge or expert competence in all the equipment and critical tasks they would need in combat.

1-87 addressed these shortfalls through focused training at the individual, squad, and platoon levels. Although this followed the normal flow of training typical of a light infantry unit (individual training, then squad exercises, culminating in a platoon live fire

exercise) it was supplemented with a training period in Florida in which the Battalion was able to provide an additional training set for every organic weapon system. It also provided a useful and focused training area to facilitate company exercises, which addressed company counterinsurgency tasks. The overall focus of every squad, platoon, and company training exercise was on counterinsurgency specific scenarios. Extra effort went into creating the most realistic and challenging environment as possible. In hindsight, it is very difficult to provide realistic training for an urban counterinsurgency environment. Without training in an area that looks, smells, sounds, and is populated like Baghdad, it is difficult to replicate the conditions that would be encountered.

Although we attempted to replicate combat conditions and create scenarios we believed would be encountered in Iraq, what actually occurred was that the tasks, conditions, and scenarios experienced in Afghanistan were replicated and reinforced. Some of this was good: focusing on vehicle movement techniques that were largely unfamiliar to tactical units; reinforcing tactical restraint when dealing with non-combatants; and exposure to improvised explosive device explosions before having to face them in combat. Where we were deficient, however, was that we were solely focused on the enemy. All scenarios were centered on finding the "bad guys" and culminated in notionally eliminating said "bad guy," thus the counterinsurgent wins. Although some scenarios focused on pacification or engaging of local leaders, success involved obtaining information from them not finding solutions to their problems. Even though our main mantra at this time was winning the hearts and minds of the people, we believed we would accomplish that by killing the "bad guys" and providing enough support to the locals to keep them quiet and out of our way.

1-87 culminated its training in March 2005 with a rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). We trained hard for a year, successfully transformed into a Unit of Action, and had made great strides in the overall capabilities of every level of the Battalion. The result was that 1-87 was successful in its mission readiness exercise (MRE) at JRTC.

Keeping in mind this is supposed to be the final check on a unit being ready to deploy to combat, it was deemed appropriate to change most of the key leaders of the

Battalion and multiple companies following our MRE. Two Company Commanders were identified as needing to be replaced (both were replaced with barely one year of command, which was unusual and attributed to the Brigade Commander not having faith in their abilities to lead in combat), A Company (which I took command of), D Company, and Headquarters Company (which I relinquished command of). Also, the Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major left the Battalion, the Executive Officer was reassigned as the Operations Officer, and a new Executive Officer was assigned. These changes occurred April-June 2005 and our Battalion would deploy to Iraq in less than six weeks. The only training events conducted after all of the changes were a brigade level Theater Specific Individual Readiness Tasks (TSIRT) which revalidated all the individual tasks that were deemed essential to all soldiers in Iraq, and a short training period in Kuwait. These leadership changes can only be understood if professional development of individual leaders is paramount over unit success. One could justify changing one or two of the most influential leaders in a Battalion but virtually all of them; unless it was a poorly performing unit (1-87 had turned in a fine performance at JRTC).

A Company (prior to my arrival) had garnered a bad reputation due to its poor performance, which was largely attributed to poor leadership at the company level. The next time we would be able to accomplish any type of training and to focus on identified shortcomings and untrained systems was in Kuwait. In Kuwait, we had approximately two weeks to conduct a myriad of training on many of the newly assigned systems and vehicles, and finish any needed weapons training. The real purpose of the training was to allow soldiers to ease into the environment in which they would be operating for the next year (getting used to 100-110 degrees in 60 lbs of gear does not happen overnight). Weather conditions and intense heat during the day limited the amount of training conducted, but we managed to get to the range a couple of times to train on the heavy weapons and were able to utilize several mock up villages and training areas to hone our offensive urban operation skills. We also pushed the familiarization of 10 basic phrases in Iraqi Arabic for every soldier. These included basic greetings and commands utilized while detaining an individual.

At the company level we also had many leadership changes just prior to deploying. One Platoon Sergeant, two Platoon Leaders, and my Executive Officer were replaced. After observing training, I decided that one of the platoon leaders would have to be replaced as well. I had the support of the new Battalion Commander and he was changed out with a Lieutenant in the S3 shop.

After our two weeks of training in Kuwait, 1-87 began to be moved into Iraq. We flew straight into Baghdad at Camp Liberty and began a 10-day period of what is called left seat right seat rides. Basically, this is a relief in place of another similar sized unit in our new area of operations. Also during this transition, units exchanged necessary equipment and move into living quarters and offices.

Several observations can be made about 1-87's preparations for the war. 1) Units were being asked to make significant structural and doctrinal changes in the short time between combat deployments. 2) Minimal guidance was being provided from higher authorities to guide training and transformation at the unit level. In most cases, the Army had an idea of what capabilities it wanted units to be able to bring to a fight but did not have a clear way of accomplishing the changes necessary. 3) Tactical successes were being taken straight from combat and applied to training units. While this is good in some instances, it can be detrimental if the context of the successful doctrine is not understood. 4) Success in operations was defined in terms of identifying and eliminating the terrorist threat. The focus of training and doctrine was on offensive tactics to eliminate a known and identified enemy element. This is evident in the selection of task priority from brigade and division commanders. At this time, the unit's focus was on the offensive skills such as weapons training and small unit offensive tactics that enabled the destruction of the enemy. 5) Understanding the culture and local conditions were not as important as understanding how the enemy conducted operations. Cultural awareness, language training, and counterinsurgency tactics were all in their infancy for the conventional Army. As a result, they were not universally embraced as necessary to success on the battlefield. They did not receive the resources and priority they deserved. 6) There was a lack of a universally understood view or common operating picture of the situation in Iraq. Most units assumed that they would obtain a clearer picture of the local

and enemy situation from the outgoing units and from higher level intelligence sources. This did not happen. Most leaders could see that the military as a whole was having uneven success in Iraq, however, the reasons for this lack of progress often centered on number of troops available rather than on the tactics being utilized. Additionally, since knowledge of culture and population is not critical to performing solely offensive operations, tactical leaders struggled to gain a clear picture of the culture and context of the conflict. 7) Transforming the way leaders think of warfare was not a primary focus. Though recognized as the hardest and most important aspect of Transformation of the Army,[33] the transformation of leaders' thinking received little instruction.

B.   WHAT FACTORS IMPACTED THE CHOICE OF STRATEGY SELECTED?

While this study cannot specifically refer the reader to what the Army's doctrine was at this time (since it didn't exist and there was not consensus by all units), I can establish what some of the central themes of our training and strategy were. So if the Army did not embrace a counterinsurgency strategy how do we characterize what the strategy was? Based on the nature of tactics and methods selected by the Army at this time, the strategy we ultimately came to use could be better described as a counter-terror campaign. This section will specifically identify the contributing factors to the development of our strategy and define what counter-terror tactics are at the tactical level in order to facilitate a framework for analysis against what we now know of counterinsurgency. The reason a counter-terror campaign was inappropriate will be described and brought out in detail in Chapter 4.

The best way to describe Army counterinsurgency doctrine, in 2004, is to say that it lacked a unified doctrine. There was a lack of consensus among units at all levels from company to brigade on exactly the type of strategy to be employed in Iraq. Additionally, there was no universal understanding of how tactical success would translate into operational and strategic success; therefore there was no unified approach to how to win

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[33] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative," *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy* (September 2003): 1.

in Iraq. At the division level, the choice of strategy was dependant on the specific region but again was not uniform throughout Iraq.[34] The most significant problem was that commanders at all levels had not had the education or exposure to understand counterinsurgency doctrine and how it differed in approach from traditional doctrine. Therefore, units going to Iraq believed that they were training for and conducting a counterinsurgency but many units' actions were more related to a counter-terror campaign. Since many units were actually conducting a counter-terror campaign, their actions violated many of the tenets of a counterinsurgency or could be characterized as unsuccessful or inappropriate practices.

The strategy of 2004-2005 consisted of finding and eliminating the enemy to win the hearts and minds of the local population. All U.S. forces needed to do was kill or capture the enemy. Therefore, all actions at the Battalion level and below were oriented towards this aim in a fashion that provided the greatest security or safety to friendly units. This reinforced the belief that U.S. forces could remain on large forward operating bases and commute to their assigned area of operation. This promoted both aims of concentrating forces for offensive actions while providing the maximum protection to friendly forces and limiting exposure to possible enemy interaction.

1. Contributing Factors to the Army's Strategy in 2004-2005

The following section identifies four factors contributing to the selection of a counter-terror strategy for Operation Iraqi Freedom III by the Army. They are: (1) The Army, as an organization, was slow to accept that part of the problem was our lack of appropriate doctrine; (2) The method of choice for the Army is traditionally offensive in nature; (3) The Forward Operating Base mindset was already SOP; (4) Poor personnel management of tactical level leaders.

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[34] Note the differences in approach as noted in Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006) 447., between the Marines and the 4th ID. It is a premise of this study that this was not a unique scenario.

a.   Factor 1

The Army, as an organization, was slow to accept that part of the problem was our lack of appropriate doctrine. Specific doctrine and written tactical guidance, for counterinsurgency, did not exist and the guidance that existed was inconsistent with accepted counterinsurgency theory. Most leaders acknowledged that traditional doctrine did not apply to the war in Iraq; however, most believed that our current skill set and traditional doctrine could be adapted to achieve success. Due to rapid changes in organizational structure, units began to develop individual strategies and tactics to accomplish assigned missions. This "parallel planning" at unit level caused many units to plan and train in ways inconsistent with appropriate counterinsurgency strategy. Additionally, higher level commanders provided minimal guidance in how to structurally and doctrinally rectify inconsistencies. And when they did, it was all encompassing and often didn't account for individual circumstances or local enemy situations. This prompted random guidance being given that didn't have universal applicability in every area of operations; however, universal adherence to guidance was mandated. Often, units would maintain tactics, techniques, and procedures, and adhere to standard operating procedures even when it was detrimental to operations.

Overall this "parallel planning" effect, combined with a lack of unifying theory and doctrine, promoted multiple approaches to the same problem set in Iraq. With every unit operating on different principles the efforts of multiple units could not be unified under a single operational design in Iraq. This lack of unity hindered a common operating picture of the operation and hindered tactical commanders from identifying appropriate measures of effectiveness. Often Brigade and Battalion Commanders would utilize measures of effectiveness that had minimal impact on the long-term success of an operation, such as the number of killed and captured enemy. When inappropriate measures of effectiveness become the goals of lower level units it is usually at the expense of the higher commander's own desired end-state and counter-productive to the success of the operation.

b. *Factor 2*

The method of choice for the Army is traditionally offensive in nature. At the tactical level, the U.S. Army consistently defines the solutions to all problems within the context of an offensive mind set or tactic, even if theory and practice argue that other tactics would be more appropriate. This bias contributed to a failure to realize that using too much force hinders the gaining of cooperation at the local level. Although restraint in a counterinsurgency environment is appropriate, units often leaned towards aggression. The aggressive approach also was the method that was most supported by Battalion and Brigade Commanders.

c. *Factor 3*

The Forward Operating Base mindset was already the standard operating procedure. The principle that U.S. forces would base their operations out of large bases such as Camp Liberty and basically commute to work each day was well established. At the unit level, we never really considered the utility of being based in the neighborhoods. The utility of how units are based was not discussed as part of our training. The first time the topic was raised was around two months into our tour when a number of Battalion and Company level leaders were advocating the use of smaller bases situated closer to or within their areas of operation. This was not seriously entertained as an option, in Baghdad, due to security concerns.

d. *Factor 4*

Poor personnel management of tactical level leaders was an issue. Personnel were moved without regard to the impact on unit effectiveness. Effective leaders were not always left in place and ineffective leaders were not always replaced in a timely manner. Mid-level managers were placing more importance on administrative "box checking" than on ensuring that commanders with proven ability in a counterinsurgency were put and left in charge of tactical units. Although battalion and brigade commanders were attached to the unit for the duration of a deployment, many

units prior to the "life cycle"[35] system had lower level leaders moved just prior to or during deployments. This does not comply with the idea that the most crucial decision makers are at the lowest levels, company and platoon, and not all leaders will be effective at executing counterinsurgency operations.

The long-term health of Army units requires leaders to be rotated routinely to ensure that they receive the appropriate experience. Evidence in this study demonstrates, however, that leaders at all levels were moved or replaced for reasons other than mission effectiveness. Additionally, higher level leaders may have been reluctant to attempt more complex or different strategies with less experienced leaders. Most commanders, at this point in Iraq, were in their first rotation. Therefore few leaders had hands on experience with executing counterinsurgency doctrine.

Due to the four factors named above, the choice to embrace an offensive strategy, which was counterinsurgency in name only, was inevitable. Because counterinsurgency strategy was a relatively new experience to most leaders there was not universal understanding or application of it. Therefore the unity of effort that is essential to ensure success was nonexistent. Furthermore, U.S. forces prefer to conduct familiar operations utilizing familiar methods, such as large forward operating bases. The strategy and campaign plan that was enacted in 2004-2005 cannot be described as a counterinsurgency operation. The strategy employed by U.S. forces was not consistent and the strategy of many Army units at this time can more accurately be described as a counter-terror campaign.

C.   COUNTER-TERROR CAMPAIGN

A counter-terror strategy, at its core, can be attributed to the level of acceptance that military and political leaders have given the Powell Doctrine since its validation following the first Gulf War. According to Max Boot, Powell Doctrine identified several extreme preconditions that must be met before commitment of U.S. forces, "which grew

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[35] This is in reference to the new system of applying a three year time frame to units. The first year all new personnel arrive to the unit, they receive appropriate equipment, and begin training, the second year training culminate, the last year and a half is available for deployment. All personnel are stabilized in the unit for the entire three year period.

out of the debacle of Vietnam and was nourished by the military's traditional distaste for small wars, has come to stand for an all-or-nothing approach to warfare, with the ideal war being one in which the U.S. wins with overwhelming force, suffers few casualties, and leaves immediately. This has become conventional wisdom in some corners."[36] Thus, how does the United States apply military force to accomplish foreign interests if it can't meet all of these criteria? The answer is small scale operations executed by specially trained units for very quick operations. This works for small, highly trained units, but does it work to take the successful strategies of these units and try to apply them to large, conventional units?

Defining what a counter-terror campaign is at the brigade level and below is somewhat challenging because most literature analyzes this type of campaign design from a state level. As identified above, the traditional units to execute such strategies have typically been elite units, referred to as Special Operations Units. To find the specific points of comparison at the tactical level this study identifies how a counter-terror campaign would be executed by a large conventional force. It will identify the main imperatives that guide the tactical execution of a counter-terror campaign.

In a counter-terror campaign, useful, accurate, and timely intelligence about enemy activity is paramount to success. Efforts are made to attain and cultivate intelligence utilizing all available assets. It is assumed by tactical units, that accurate and timely intelligence will be provided from higher echelons to the tactical units.[37]

A counter-terror campaign is threat based and does not attempt to influence the local populations in which it has to operate. In fact, the approach seeks only to act rapidly against terrorist elements. This approach can concentrate friendly forces on bases separate from the local population. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the bases are secure from indigenous networks or terrorists.

The definition of success in a counter-terror campaign is in the capture or destruction of a defined enemy force. This approach utilizes the offensive force of U.S.

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[36] Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace, Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002), 319.

[37] Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 319.

units to overwhelm the defined enemy elements. It ties directly into the Jominian form of warfare[38] in bringing overwhelming force to a named decisive point to eliminate the enemy. It also requires a relatively small force against most enemy elements, due to the disproportionate capability and lethality of the U.S. military.

Terrorist and friendly elements are clearly defined in a counter-terror campaign, no neutral element exist. Thus, anyone who fights against the counter-terror force is considered the enemy, is supportive of the terrorist elements, and must be eliminated. Counter-terror assumes that all enemy elements, and by definition terrorists, are clearly identified and that their motives are clearly understood as they pertain to mission success.

Terrorist activities should be preempted because, as the counter-terrorist, you have superior intelligence, understand who and why the enemies is fighting, and prefer to engage the enemy kinetically, preempting the enemy's activities is possible and preferred. The ability to interdict the enemy's activities also is equated to maintaining the initiative.

Collateral damage is expected and does little to impact overall success and it is likely when the location of the kinetic action is in an urban setting. This is acceptable if it results in the elimination of terrorists. Destruction of property and the deaths of the local population are not important because this has little relevance to the physical destruction of the terrorist network.

Lastly, the combat phase of a counter-terror campaign is short in duration. While the entire involvement in a specific mission may be long-term, the combat phase or phase in which the counter-terrorist is physically maneuvering to eliminate the enemy element is short.

D. WHY THE ARMY DID NOT ADAPT ITS DOCTRINE AFTER BEGINNING OPERATIONS

This study has established why a counter-terror strategy was initially employed by many units and identified the themes that would characterize a counter-terror campaign at the tactical level for a conventional unit. The tenets of a counter-terror campaign

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[38] Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 112.

contradict most of the key tenets of a counterinsurgency. Applying a counter-terror strategy to a problem set that mandates a counterinsurgency strategy will not end in success. The question remains: Why U.S. Army units took nearly two more years to recognize fully that our approach was flawed? Three factors characterize the problems with our strategy following the start of combat operations. (1) Commanders were reluctant to take risks to discover innovative solutions or to question inappropriate tactics. (2) The U.S. Army had not facilitated non- kinetic means for success at the tactical level. (3) Task overload was considered an element of combat rather than an element of leadership to be mitigated by guidance from higher commanders.

1. Factor 1

Commanders were reluctant to take risks to discover innovative solutions or to question inappropriate tactics. This was due to a perception of acceptable methods of higher level commanders. This fostered a general reluctance to accept more risk to capitalize on tactical gains. Commanders were more likely to increase safety measures and force protection than to pursue more risky but ultimately more successful practices. Local opinions and lower tactical commanders were largely ignored if their ideas did not mesh with the preconceived notions of how operations would proceed, even more so if immediate successes (in Army terms usually translating into better security) were not achieved. Higher level commanders often mandated cookie cutter solutions that disregarded the gains to be made by utilizing more effective techniques. Company Commanders were sometimes slow to suggest changes to tactics, techniques, and procedures to address enemy tactics. They were equally worried about how higher level leaders would perceive their choice of tactics. An innovative tactic can easily be perceived as tactically unsound or unnecessarily risky. Therefore, if there is no universal understanding of the appropriate strategy and tactics for the environment then understanding what is tactically sound cannot be universally understood. Risk is often defined by the observer and its severity and applicability is largely in the eye of the beholder.

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2. Factor 2

The U.S. Army had not facilitated non-kinetic means for success at the tactical level. Because the Army did not do a good job of facilitating the best solutions to the problem set, leaders continued to pursue means that were within there known skill set and sphere of influence. Even though it is known and widely accepted that the best weapons to win in a counterinsurgency are typically monetary based; i.e., money, contracts, and jobs, these "weapons" were largely unavailable to company commanders at this time. Without these non-kinetic means to win the favor and support of local populations, tactical level leaders were left to fix a situation without one of its most effective tools. This situation has been described as trying to turn a screw with a hammer; in Iraq at this time we were only considering different types or sizes of hammer in which to turn the screw rather than considering the use of a screwdriver.

3. Factor 3

Task overload was considered an element of combat rather than an element of leadership to be mitigated by guidance from higher commanders. The Army did not always recognize it could not accomplish everything at once. Therefore, it was important that appropriate priority was given to the right activities and sequencing of tasks was coordinated. This was rarely the case. The typical experience for tactical commanders was to have many more tasks assigned than could realistically be completed. This forced commanders to "cut corners" or find short cuts to completing tasks "just well enough" instead of meeting the higher commander's overall operational intent. Additionally, the Army always sided with security improvement tasks and usually would only rely on U.S. forces for accomplishing critical operations.

E. CONCLUSION

This section identified four factors contributing to the selection of strategy for Operation Iraqi Freedom III by the Army. They are: (1) The Army, as an organization, was slow to accept that part of the problem was our lack of appropriate doctrine; (2) The

method of choice for the Army is traditionally offensive in nature; (3) The Forward Operating Base mindset was already SOP; (4) Poor personnel management of tactical level leaders. These factors lead the U.S. Army to pursue a counter-terror strategy which was counterproductive because it was overly focused on the destruction of the enemy and did not give enough regard to gaining the support of the local population, which ultimately proved to fuel the insurgency we were trying to eliminate.

Additionally, this section identified three factors that characterize the problems with our strategy following the start of combat operations. (1) Commanders were reluctant to take risks to discover innovative solutions or to question inappropriate tactics. (2) The U.S. Army had not facilitated non- kinetic means for success at the tactical level. (3) Task overload was considered an element of combat rather than an element of leadership to be mitigated by guidance from higher commanders. These factors reduced leader's ability to connect the right tools and techniques to the problem set and hindered our ability to quickly adapt to the conflict.

IV.   WHY OUR STRATEGY WAS WRONG

This chapter identifies why Army use of a counter-terror strategy was ill-suited for the mission assigned.   This chapter begins by discussing "successful versus unsuccessful" strategies for a counterinsurgency.   Then will refer back to the central themes of a counterinsurgency established in Chapter 2 to frame the discussion and to provide the points of comparison of where the Army strategy went wrong.

A.   SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

The chart below[39] is an interpretation of Kalev Sepp's work in an article in *Military Review,* appearing in Jun 2005, titled *Best Practices in Counterinsurgency.*[40] The only difference between the following and Sepp's work is the noticeable omission in the unsuccessful practices of, "Primacy of military direction of counter-insurgency." Politics not military considerations dominate modern warfare.   Currently, it has to be a working assumption on the U.S. Army's part that we are able to plan and win a counterinsurgency conflict, but does that mean we "should" be the lead component.   A recurrent theme of most counterinsurgency theorists, even old warriors, is that the military should not have the overall responsibility and authority for a counterinsurgency conflict.

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[39]Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* Headquarters Department of the Army and Marine Corps, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 51.

[40] Kalev Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005): 8-12.

[40] FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* 51.

Successful Practices	Unsuccessful Practices
• Emphasize intelligence. • Focus on the population, their needs, and security. • Establish and expand secure areas. • Isolate insurgents from the population (population control). • Appoint a single authority, usually a dynamic, charismatic leader. • Conduct effective, pervasive psychological operations. • Provide amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents. • Place police in the lead with military support. • Expand and diversify the police force. • Train military forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations. • Embed special operations forces and advisors with indigenous forces. • Deny the insurgents sanctuary. ¶	• Place priority on killing and capturing the enemy, not on engaging the population. • Conduct battalion-sized operations as the norm. • Concentrate military forces in large bases for protection. • Focus special operations forces primarily on raiding. • Place a low priority on assigning quality advisors to host-nation forces. • Build and train host-nation security forces in the of the U.S. Army's image. • Ignore peacetime government processes, including legal procedures. • Allow open borders, airspace, and coastlines.

Figure 1. Best Practices of COIN[41]

The list above is a useful transition as it highlights both the successful practices of a counterinsurgency and also provides the points of contention, the unsuccessful practices. If an inappropriate technique is used to address a problem set, it could be named as unsuccessful but would largely be considered wrong for the problem set since it could be successful if applied to the correct problem set.

B.   THEMES OF A SUCCESSFUL COIN

In the following section the four themes of successful counterinsurgency will be used as a framework for comparison with what the Army did in Iraq from 2004-2005.

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[41] From FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* 51.

1.   Theme 1 of a Successful Counterinsurgency

Unity of effort and clarity of purpose are essential in a counterinsurgency. A universal understanding of how and what the Army was attempting to accomplish was not present. For example, following the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003 it was clear that a common approach to the problem set was not present among Division Commanders. In Tikrit, when the 4th Infantry Division replaced the 1st Marine Division they deemed it necessary to revert to a more heavy hand following the initiation of postwar or phase four operations (first stages of a counterinsurgency or prevention of an insurgency). Michael Gordon and General Bernard Trainor[42] noted that, "a budding cooperative environment between citizens and American forces was quickly snuffed out" by the actions of the 4th ID. One can argue which unit was right, but the point is that different commanders identified different solutions to the same problem set and many units selected a more aggressive approach. Scenarios such as this one have been repeated time and again in Iraq.

Many units throughout Iraq implemented effective counterinsurgency tactics.[43] Evidence now suggests it was at the battalion and brigade level that the lack of "getting" counterinsurgency occurred, but this lack of awareness was not universal among all Battalion and Brigade Commanders. General Patraeus understood and employed counterinsurgency tactics the moment the 101st had occupied their area of operations in northern Iraq. His approach fit with the best counterinsurgency practices.[44] However, the words counterinsurgency or cultural awareness never made it into any written commander's guidance provided to 1-87 prior to deploying to Iraq.[45] Considering this was almost a year and half after the initial invasion, this shortcoming is hard to justify.

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[42] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 447.

[43] John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xv.

[44] Lt. Gen David H. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq, *Military Review* 4 (January-February 2006).

[45] I posit this not only as a company commander in the brigade but also as the primary staff officer who assisted in the publication of the 10th MTN DIV 350-1 manual, November 2003, and in the formulation of three iterations of the brigade commanders guidance to 1 BCT, January-May 2004.

The Commander's understanding of the conflict in which he is engaging is reflected in the guidance he gives to his subordinate units and ultimately in the unit actions.

Cooperation cannot be brought about through sheer intimidation. Gaining the hearts and minds of a population is when local "buy in" has been obtained. Without local cooperation nothing else works and the thought that eliminating all of the "terrorists" would somehow create cooperation was very misguided.

Every counterinsurgency will differ and require adaptability and innovation at the lowest levels to facilitate success. This is what some commanders did not understand about counterinsurgency. Many tactics that were recommended and executed by company commanders were the correct tactics for the fight but were not recognized and explored by senior officers. Often tactics that were not working were encouraged and the ones that would work were discouraged. Tactical innovation was not rewarded, but rather adherence to what higher command had already decided they wanted to occur.

Company Commanders operated in different ways in Iraq. 1-87 replaced three different units during our tour in Iraq. In each transition process, several observations could be made about the units we were replacing. 1) They were executing operations almost exclusively by vehicle. 2) They were highly reluctant to perform dismounted operations and to interact with local populations. 3) All units believed, when driving, that "speed" was the single most significant factor to increase safety due to the IED threat. 4) All units had a very poor picture of the culture, informal networks of the economy, and local politics. 5) Most units were focused on finding the enemy and ensuring their safety at the expense of local population. 6) Warning shots were a standard method for getting the local peoples' attention, not used solely as a measure of escalation of force in a confrontation with an unknown target.

All of these factors led leaders in 1-87 to be reluctant to expose our soldiers to the tactics, techniques, and procedures that other units were employing prior to our assignment to these new areas of operations. The over protection of friendly forces, reluctance to engage with locals, and generally hyper-offensive approach to operations meant that my company inherited a local population very dissatisfied and angered at the

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U.S. Army. The connection between the approach taken by the counterinsurgent and the support of the local population can be demonstrated by the lack of attacks within the town limits of Al-Shulla.

Prior to A Company assignment to Al-Shulla, the previous units had been attacked on many times within the town limits and on the main highway. In A Company's first four month period, we were attacked once by a drive-by shooting (who we subsequently captured on the main highway), once by a sniper on the main highway south of Al-Shulla, and once by a mortar engagement on the very north edge of Al-Shulla, but never within the town limits of Al-Shulla.
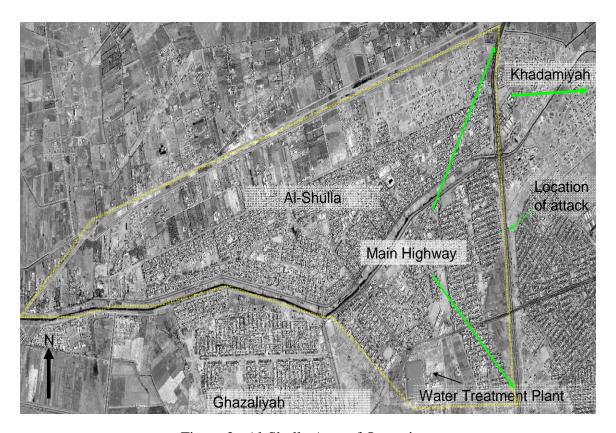

Figure 2. Al-Shulla Area of Operations

I attribute this relative lack of enemy activity to our correct application of classic counterinsurgency techniques, the restrained and respectful manner in which A Company

soldiers operated during this period, and the subsequent support and cooperation we received from the local population and sources of influence in the area of operations.

All U.S. Army units were not operating in this manner. Many units operated in an aggressive fashion, which was only exacerbated when the unit sustained casualties. Even without specific knowledge of their involvement, leaders often would attribute some level of fault for their casualties to locals in the area of the event. This led units and soldiers to see all Iraqis as possible enemies and inhibited their ability to engage with and gain the trust of local populations. Evidence of similar actions can be seen in the behavior of Marines in the Haditha case.[46] A contributing factor to the Haditha incident was the inclination of these soldiers to pursue a more aggressive approach that may not have been completely warranted by the situation. Although the actions of these marine's have been found to be within the bounds of their rules of engagement, the effects of their intended and collateral damage in this case had a very negative effect on the general Iraqi perception of all U.S. military tactics in Iraq.

Some attribute this to the "three block war"[47] concept but the evidence suggests something else as units would operate differently given the same scenarios and circumstances and have differing results with locals. This suggests the lack of a unified approach to conduct this conflict. This lack of clarity flowed down to whatever level an individual commander made a concerted effort to unify the actions and doctrine of all of the elements under him or her. This mostly occurred at the brigade level; in Baghdad, due to the larger population ratio and complexity of environment, it often shifted as low as the company level.

2.   Theme 2 of a Successful Counterinsurgency

The counterinsurgent must fight the enemy's ideology and methods, not the enemy directly. The measures of success in a counterinsurgency must be defined in terms of defeating the enemy's ideology and methods and not in terms of defeating the

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[46] Tim McGirk, "Collateral Damage or Civilian Massacre in Haditha?," *Time*, March 19, 2006, http://www.time.com/time/world/printout/0,8816,1174649,00.html, (accessed 14 November 2007).

[47] Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War." *Marines Magazine*, January 1991.

people identified as the enemy. This is extremely significant for a counterinsurgent because the insurgent uses the support of the population in which he operates. Therefore, eliminating the insurgent is like pulling the leaves off of a weed (the roots are still there) and even worse the act of pulling the weed often spreads the seeds for more weeds to grow. This can be compared to the effects of collateral damage and injuries to neutral or friendly local populations. Once the local population knows or perceives that the counterinsurgent is not executing operations in a manner that will protect them they may be inclined to side with the insurgent.[48]

Negative perceptions of the counterinsurgent are exacerbated when the counterinsurgent does not have a clear understanding of the culture or the complex nature of the given population. Army leaders did not have a clear understanding of the culture and networks of influence in each of their assigned areas of operation, this shortcoming can be overcome by utilizing a restrained approach to operations and by taking the time to obtain information and situational understanding. Neither of these options were available to Army units in 2004-2005. Units were hamstrung by a lack of time and understanding when it came to identifying attainable goals; i.e., focus on identifying IED cells and insurgent and terrorist leaders for elimination. When counter-terror objectives became the primary focus, they validated methods and tactics that often infuriated local populations. These operations were detrimental when it came to gaining local support and "buy in" to facilitate economic and political improvement.

As an example of focusing on the enemy rather then the method, I will recount a discussion with a senior officer about countering IED (improvised explosive device) operations on main supply routes in Baghdad. It occurred during a meeting with the leadership of 1-87 in which we were discussing our tactics for countering IED activity in our area of operations. We had had tangible success at reducing IED emplacement. A Colonel, who was conducting a study of U.S. tactics, was leading the discussion with the intent of spreading useful tactics that had been used in other areas and to identify techniques we had found successful. After some debate over what we were doing and

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[48] Carter Markesian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah", *The Journal of Strategic Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 3, 423-452 (June 2006): 424.

what we were finding successful, the point was made, to the Colonel, that the only way to ensure coverage of a stretch of road was to have visibility of the stretch of road and have a unit dedicated to responding immediately to it. This approach was identified by the Colonel as being defensive minded in that it required committing at least one patrol to one section of road (not more than 2 miles in length). He concluded it was more effective to "hunt" the IED teams, under the assumption that once the team was eliminated the threat was eliminated. Many of those present tried to explain that those emplacing the IEDs were likely unskilled hired labor and were essentially disposable to the leaders and planners of IED operations. This Colonel became visibly agitated that this was not an offensive approach. To attain tangible success, soldiers had to go on the offense and "take the fight to the enemy." It did not seem to matter that this was not the way we had already achieved tangible success in reducing the threat.

The scenario above illustrates a couple of issues for this study. First, senior leaders had a preconceived idea about conducting the fight in an offensive manner. Second, innovation was occurring at the lowest tactical level throughout Iraq, but the gate holders for spreading successful tactics, techniques, and procedures had to believe in their utility for the ideas to spread. Third, much of the U.S. Army approach to eliminating threats in Iraq was to focus directly on the enemy presenting the threat rather than disrupting or eliminating the conditions and facilitators of insurgent activities. Focusing on gaining the support of the population was immensely more effective at eliminating IED teams than focusing on killing or capturing the teams directly. Nevertheless, a majority of Army assets and operations were focused on killing IED teams rather than on fostering cooperation with local populations.

Additionally, the idea of cooperation at the local level was not universally accepted as necessary for success in a counterinsurgency. Many believed there were bad guys and good guys and all we had to do was identify the good guys and kill or capture all the bad ones. The reality is that most were neither good nor bad--they were just trying to survive. How the units conduct themselves convinces the local population to either support them or the insurgent. As most counterinsurgency literature and FM 3-24 sites, the true good and bad elements in a counterinsurgency usually represent less than 20% of

the total population. The vast majority will be neutral and based on the effectiveness of the counterinsurgent or the insurgent will be swayed to support one or the other.

The commitment to offensive operations has other detrimental effects on a counterinsurgent force. First, it inhibits innovation as lower level leaders start to doubt either their own approach or that of their leaders. As a result units tend to adopt the first solution that satisfies the commander and has some level of success even if more successful methods are known. Second, it reinforces ineffective methods because success is defined as meeting the commander's expectations rather than meeting measures of effectiveness that are tied to an appropriate strategy. Lastly, when methods and tactics are in question, soldiers will often be more reluctant to take risks, because it is rarely a secret in tactical units when they are doing something just because it is what "the boss wants done."

While commanders are encouraged, in most circumstances, to question the mission and assigned tasks to clarify requirements and form a coherent picture of how their actions will contribute to overall objectives, questioning why we are choosing the course of action usually is not up for discussion. Typical guidance is given through a mission statement, which always includes who, what, when, where, and why of the operation. Information is also passed through the higher commander's intent which provides the overall desired effect and thus contributes to a lower level commander's ability to adjust actions to meet the commander's stated intent.[49] The rest of a typical operation order will provide the how, but many times a particular commander does not address why they have chosen the particular "how." Sometimes the stated "commander's intent" is not the same as what lower level commanders perceive to be the performance measures that matter to their professional success.

This is not to suggest that commanders were asking subordinate units to do one thing and then expecting them to do another. Instead this activity is rooted in the learned behavior and associated expectations of the higher commanders' "lens" through which they view lower commanders' actions. These expectations go beyond the specific actions

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[49] Field Manual 3-21.10, *The Infantry Rifle Company*, Headquarters Department of the Army, Washington D.C., July 2006, 2-10.

conducted in the heat of combat and tend to become more of a perception of how a unit conducts itself and much less about reality or specific performance measures that are established through clear guidance.

This gets to the heart of why the Army perpetuates an offensive nature in most operations it conducts. It does so because it is what is expected and because a perceived offensive spirit in a unit and leader is highly prized, recognized, and rewarded. It is now encapsulated as a portion of the "Warrior Ethos"[50] but it has always been a central explanation of why the U.S. Army "wins" when all else is equal with an opponent. When all else is equal, he who is more aggressive usually wins. A failure to conduct yourself and your unit in an aggressive manner can be viewed in different ways by higher commanders. It may be recognized as the smart, controlled, and confident approach or it maybe characterized as confused, slow to react, reluctant to fight, or most damning fearful of a fight.

Another issue is why lower commanders are reluctant to question the "how" of an operation. Company commanders are not young or slow folks, they are typically in their early 30s, have strong personalities and have a track record of success in life, academics, and the military that precedes them into command. Most have committed to a career of the military and have to consider the impact of a negative review from a superior. To question "how" a higher commander is choosing to conduct a mission can easily be construed as either mildly insubordinate, uncommitted to the mission, or lacking understanding of the tactical situation, all of which do not reflect well on a leader. Thus, if lower commanders know their superior is offensively minded, and even if they disagree with the chosen course of action, they may be very reluctant to question senior officer's orders or perceptions of reality.

Ultimately, U.S. forces were focused on defeating named individuals or groups and the means to accomplish this defeat of the enemy was predominantly offensive in nature and did not adequately appreciate the negative effects of our methods.

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[50] Field Manual 1, *The Army*, Headquarters Department of the Army and Marine Corps, Washington DC, June 2005, iv.

3.   Theme 3 of a Successful Counterinsurgency

Legitimacy for the counterinsurgent and the host-nation government is paramount. In light of theory and practice, attaining and sustaining legitimacy for the counterinsurgent is vitally important to receiving local support and to improve the security situation to attain strategic goals. As a conflict continues, and starts to move into its second, third, fourth years, the local population must perceive the goals of the counterinsurgent are to transfer responsibility and authority over to local governance. If this is not occurring fast enough, local populations will begin to resent the counterinsurgent force as the extension of the country sponsoring them and begin to suspect the goals of the counterinsurgent are nefarious or inconsistent with their goals. In the 2004-2005 timeframe, even our staunchest supporters in Iraq began to question our motives and lack of success in revitalizing their economy and infrastructure. This has often been referred to as the "Man on the Moon effect." Essentially, this means that the local perception, in other countries, is the United States has the resources and ability to accomplish whatever it wants. This was demonstrated by our ability to put a man on the moon. This verbiage is substantiated through personal interaction and communication with the Iraqis.[51]

The United States had been slow in providing the needed improvements to security, social services, and political representation for many reasons. One was our failure to use the right weapon for the task. As David Kilcullen notes, "the best weapons for a COIN do not shoot."[52] Money, popular local support, and mutual respect are the weapons of choice in a counterinsurgency. A wave or a smile will likely gain you more than a shout or a warning shot. Weapons that shoot will have a positive effect on the enemy and negative effect on civilians. Weapons that do not shoot can have a positive effect on both.

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[51] In a conversation in November 2005 with one of my interpreters, when asked his opinion of the local perception of the U.S., he replied, " not good, most people think that since the U.S. has put a man on the moon providing simple things like adequate fuel, electricity, and security to Iraq should be easy".

[52] David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Article, Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, 3 (May-June 2006), 1-11.

Although we trained to use money and to coordinate our efforts with other civilian agencies; it was extremely difficult, at the company level, to understand what other agencies were doing. There was little money available to battalion level and below to employ at their discretion. From the viewpoint of a company commander, the only money actually used was small rewards (a few hundred dollars) for tips that lead to weapons caches or the capture of known terrorists. All civil service or infrastructure projects were incredibly cumbersome to submit and never resulted in anything happening in a timely manner. The unit prior to mine and my unit, had submitted several construction projects for schools and medical facilities in Al-Shulla, but to my knowledge none were completed in the six months we were there. The reality on the ground was we did not have the "best weapons" for the fight in which we were engaged.

If each company commander in Iraq had approximately $100,000 or even $10,000 towards projects that they deemed necessary and utilized local means to accomplish these projects we would have had positive results. This is a very small amount of money, when compared to the unknown billions of dollars that have been wasted, stolen, or otherwise misappropriated in Iraq. Also, had we used smaller bases with local supply networks to support them, not only would we have encouraged local buy in (literally and figuratively) to our presence there, but we also would have pumped huge sums of money into the local economies. This would have encouraged legitimate business and commerce rather than unwittingly spawning a black-market nightmare in almost every commodity. Fuel finds its way quickly onto the black market due to its limited availability, black market vendors were on every street corner in Baghdad. If U.S. forces had to engage the local markets for food, fuel, and housing (at least for part of their needs) it would have involved U.S. policy-makers in the pricing and supply of these commodities to each community, creating better insight and communication within these networks. This type of venture could cause mass inflation, but limited U.S. entry into local markets could have had more positive effects of fostering stability and jump-starting economic activity in local communities. In Baghdad, this could have been a pivotal effort in gaining the support of local groups who had influence in the communities.

U.S. forces did not utilize economic programs because senior commanders did not trust the lowest level commanders with cash funds of any significance. This reluctance to empower junior officers was regrettable because the only effective governance occurred at the local and neighborhood level. Had the commanders who had responsibility for a town been able to stimulate their local economies and encourage cooperation between neighborhoods, the resulting economic activity could have spread to the district level and would have provided a needed incentive for cooperation between local and district level leadership.

a.   *The Iraqi Face as a Puppet*

A universal truth of counterinsurgency is you will never pass any of your operations to a host-nation if you do not first allow them the opportunity to learn from their own mistakes and grow in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. This tenet was first noted by T.E. Lawrence in which he noted that, "it is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them." However, we must acknowledge his reference to their ability to do something "tolerably".[53] The issue that develops is how long does the counterinsurgent continue to intervene and at what point does this intervention start to be regarded more as meddling and ensuring short term successes rather than as assisting the host-nation to gain capability.

U.S. officers and policy-makers in Iraq were primarily concerned in late 2005 with facilitating a successful ratification of the constitution and subsequent election in December 2005. Although everyone agreed that holding free and fair elections was our objective there was much debate about how we chose to ensure a successful election. Much time was spent in the area of operations identifying polling stations, coordinating activities with the different individuals involved in the voting process and securing the sites, and hardening polling sites. Hardening polling sites was especially demanding because it involved physically transporting and emplacing hundreds of barriers and wire to mitigate perceived threats from vehicle born IEDs and coordinated attacks. Closing streets to vehicles traffic also had a negative impact on the local economies. Maintaining

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[53] T.E. Lawrence, "The 27 Articles of T.E. Lawrence", *The Arab Bulletin*, 20 August 1917, http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/Lawrence _27_articles.htm, (accessed 20 November 2007).

security at polling places was considered central to ensuring a successful election, but other less disruptive and less expensive activities, out of necessity, received far less attention and assistance.

Ultimately we achieved a successful election without allowing a single attack on a polling station. However, what other activities were ignored or moved to the bottom of the priority list by focusing so much on this one activity. In Al-Shulla, for instance the recommendation was for far less physical hardening of individual polling sites and for U.S. forces to concentrate on monitoring key points of entry into the town, allowing the local security forces to focus on the individual security of each polling station. This plan was dismissed immediately and a cookie cutter solution to secure each polling site was imposed from higher headquarters. Apparently, senior U.S. officers did not trust the local security forces to provide for the security of each polling site or they did not trust the assessments of lower level commanders when it did not confirm the view of the situation held at headquarters.

This kind of micromanagement was a mistake that was repeatedly made by senior officers. In the aforementioned example, the objective was to provide security to all polling sites and district election offices in the town (a total of nearly 60 in Al-Shulla). The initial task was for units to assess their area of operations and provide recommendations on how they would secure it. Every company and battalion area of operations had a different number of polling sites within them, some as few as 10 and some as many as 60. Each company then recommended their desired course of action to the battalion leadership. The problem came when some commanders, who had fewer sites, recommended a much greater amount of physical hardening for each sites, while other commanders, who had more sites often within site of each other, recommended less individual hardening and a mutually supporting approach to the area. Also, each company had to consider the security situation of their individual area of operations.

The reaction from battalion was such that it did not tell each commander what actions they should take; instead they would increase the information requirements and repeatedly suggest the upgrading of security measures whether or not they were needed. The perception quickly became that unless each polling site was a fortress it was

not sufficient for the election. Soon it became apparent there was almost a competition between units to have the most physically secured polling sites whether or not it actually helped or hindered other activities in the town. Furthermore, little regard was given to how this glut of activity would impact other activities of the units and the towns in which they operated. There was an overriding sense the right answer had already been determined at higher levels and that each company demonstrated their understanding of the operation by willingly coming on board with the "approved solution." Also, the method of ensuring a successful election only further demonstrated our complete unwillingness to rely on local security forces and governance to facilitate such an activity. The largest contributing factor to this was our perception this was the "decisive point" of this phase of the Iraq War and was far too important to trust to the Iraqi security forces and governance. While there is some relevance to this point we should have found small successes where we could have handed more responsibility and importance to local forces and officials.

Another issue during this time period was that the officers and non-commissioned officers that were selected to lead and participate in transition teams or partner organizations. These assignments, although named as one of the most important tasks for overall operations, were usually assigned to the least capable and expendable leaders. From my brigade I can site the captain I replaced for company command was assigned to a military transition team for an Iraqi battalion partnered with our brigade. Senior officers apparently believed that he was not capable of leading a company in combat but he was capable of serving on a transition team. And it says a great deal about the relative importance the U.S. Army was placing on filing transition teams with quality personnel.

Gaining legitimacy for our actions or for local governance and law enforcement was not a primary concern behind U.S. operations. Evidence for this lack of interest was our assignment of weak leaders to positions related to transitioning authority and responsibility to the Iraqi government and security forces, lack of ability to have success across the spectrum of counterinsurgency tasks (economic, political, and security), and inability to use our money and resources effectively.

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4.   Theme 4 of a Successful Counterinsurgency

The counterinsurgent must have a long-term commitment and be prepared to adapt. Counterinsurgency doctrine must be as flexible and fluid as the enemy's tactics. It is difficult for tactical commanders to be flexible, however, if higher levels of command are wedded to tactics, techniques, and procedures that are no longer effective. An example would be the guidance given for patrol size and composition in 2005. Early in our rotation guidance was given that all patrols would consist of a minimum of four vehicles and 12 personnel. Furthermore, it was mandated that each patrol had to remain in a mutually supporting posture. The reasoning for this guidance was that there been an increase of enemy attacks on two or three vehicle convoys. If one vehicle was engaged by an IED a single patrol would not have enough support to provide 360 degree security while recovering an immobile vehicle.

This guidance was appropriate for areas where convoys could not reasonably expect to get any quick assistance from adjacent units. In Baghdad, however, this was not the case. For instance, in Al-Shulla for a period of nearly six months there were at least two patrols (one platoon of soldiers and 8 vehicles) in a four square mile urban area for almost 100% of the time out of just my company. There also were adjacent companies directly south and east of our area of operations that had similar levels of security.

The impact of the guidance was that it severely limited our options in how we could array our available forces. We were essentially limited to assigning a patrol to one small area because all four vehicles had to remain very close to each other, and it was discouraged to place small elements of four or less soldiers in an observation post (an over watch position that was somewhat separated from their vehicle support). Because most patrols had less than eight personnel to dismount, this limited a patrol to employing one observation post rather than multiple supporting positions.

As the months past in Baghdad, it became evident that we were not being attacked within our area of operations in Al-Shulla. All attacks we received had been on the periphery of the town and were usually thwarted to some extent by local security forces. By November 2005 we had received one mortar attack, no damage or casualties; one

VBIED (vehicle-born IED), one vehicle damaged and two minor casualties; and one sniper attack, our only serious casualty of the deployment. All other attacks had been stopped, mitigated, or responded to by local security forces (Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, or the local neighborhood watch).

A Company focused its effort on maintaining restraint and building trust with local security forces which resulted in very high levels of cooperation with all security elements in Al-Shulla. Consequently, a more dispersed approach to Al-Shulla proved to be appropriate. We attempted separating four vehicle patrols into two vehicle sections and to consistently put out one or two OPs to cover more area or accomplish multiple tasks at the same time. This approach proved difficult to pursue because every time a higher ranking officer or NCO passed through Al-Shulla and did not see a four vehicle patrol in the locations expected, they questioned how I was employing my units.

Ideally, pursuing this dispersion to the point that team sized elements (3-5 personnel) patrolling the town with one vehicle in support would have been more appropriate to the security environment. Each team element would have been mutually supporting with four to eight similar elements throughout the area of operations. Additionally, all elements would have been managed and tracked from a central base located in the town.

The evidence suggests that higher level commanders often mandated cookie cutter solutions that disregarded the gains to be made by utilizing more effective techniques. Often we were overly concerned with the short term goals at the expense of long term success. Another explanation for the situation described above is that the higher commander's goal of ensuring moderate casualties had priority over tactical effectiveness.

Another example of inability to adapt is the choice of most units to base themselves on large forward operating bases such as Camp Liberty and to commute to work each day. At the unit level, we never really considered the utility of being based in the neighborhoods prior to deployment. Although it was recognized early on in our rotation that establishing smaller neighborhood bases would likely be more effective, the idea was never adopted in Baghdad. Several reasons were behind our unwillingness to

spread out into company or platoon bases. First, a recent suicide attack at a dining facility in Mosul (21 December 2004) seemed to suggest to many that security could only be found in deployments to large operating bases. The prevailing wisdom was that if an insurgent could infiltrate a large installation then the prospect of infiltrating a small one such as a platoon or company base should be simple and the effect of and media attention given to a small attack overrunning any base would be catastrophic to the perception of U.S. dominance. Second, there was a perception that we needed to keep our "footprint" small at the time. One of the major points in the media at the time was the sheer number of U.S. installations being built in Iraq.[54] Many Iraqis feared that because we were building so much we had designs to stay in the country permanently. Therefore, increasing the number of bases, even small ones, was not considered. Third, large bases increase protection and survivability by focusing large amounts of force protection materials, such as concrete walls, in a small geographic area. This allows a larger number of forces to take advantage of an increased level of protection from a limited amount of assets. Also, by concentrating forces duties can be distributed to individual units allowing certain units to focus on securing their areas of operation while other units can focus on force protection of the base.

While there is some merit to each of these points, the reality was that bases in the neighborhoods would have been much simpler to protect than any large base. Although a certain amount of force is required to protect a small base, those security forces usually could monitor events in areas of town near the base and thus could contribute to some extent to overall security in the area of operations. Furthermore, when on a base of 100 or less personnel, everyone knows exactly who should and should not be on the base, thus internal security is actually much greater than a large base. Lastly, to date there has been no successful attempts at overrunning any size base. Massing the enemy force to accomplish such a mission would easily be spotted, allowing reinforcements to be brought forward to defeat the attack.

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[54] This web site sums up one of the media topics of that time frame. It can be proven in referencing the dates of the works sited by the page. All of which date it to prior to May 2005. http://www.fcnl.org/iraq/bases.htm, (Accessed on 30 November 2007).

In regards to "footprint" this seems largely irrelevant and was more of a self-assessment than an accurate assessment of how we were perceived by the locals. Consider that in the eyes of the Iraqi we are either there or not and they didn't care whether we were on one large base or many small ones; their desire was and is for us to do our job and leave.

Ultimately we failed to understand the impact we could have had by being deployed in smaller bases situated within the neighborhoods. Although some lower level leaders were promoting the idea, senior officers were reluctant to accept the risk involved. Admittedly, there was, as well, a reluctance to leave the relatively plush conditions of Camp Victory to voluntarily subject the unit to spartan conditions that would be necessary on a smaller base.

C.   CONCLUSION

Many Army units in Iraq violated the tenets of a counterinsurgency. No unity of effort or clarity of purpose existed in the form of doctrine or unifying strategy. U.S. forces were almost solely focused on killing or capturing the enemy as a means to gain the support of the population, which was unfounded in theory and ineffective. U.S. forces did not have a true commitment to the local government as the best means to maintain their legitimacy. This was demonstrated repeatedly by reluctance to pass operations and responsibility over to the host nation to be handled "tolerably". U.S. forces also tended to view each rotation in isolation rather than as part of an on-going and continuing operation and senior leadership was high resistant to innovative or risky approaches to the problem set presented.

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V. APPLYING THEORY TO UNDERSTAND WHY

This study will draw from theories to assist in understanding the performance of an organization such as the U.S. Army. First, Organizational Theory provides explanatory power into the unique ways and reasons large organizations function and react specifically in regards to organizational change. Second, Prospect Theory provides alternate perspective on how and why an individual or organization might react to their environment. Explaining why the U.S. Army addressed organizational change is most convincing when presented from multiple view points or perspectives.

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CULTURE

The number of organization-focused theories is vast and has a large amount of literature in the fields of political science, international relations, and business. Specific theories that provide explanatory power to military organizations grappling with change or innovation is the next focus. Most organizational theory shares common aspects in the organizational-process model in that the actor is the organization itself. Because organizations are basically locked into a certain process or means of execution, understanding that process can give predictive and explanatory power to the actions of the organization. Organizational Theory focuses on the procedures that will lead to the desired interest. These procedures become codified as standard operating procedures (SOP) which provide clarity to peoples' actions, allow others to predict what one will do, and are necessary when attempting to coordinate the actions of many individuals within one organization. According to Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, "Reliable performance of critical tasks and associated compliance with targets and constraints requires SOPs."[55]

Organizational culture also effects the decision making process. Organizational culture is the set of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and formal knowledge that

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[55] Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, second edition, (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 1999), 169.

contribute to collective understanding of the organization as an entity.[56] Organizational culture provides the lens through which individuals within the organization view their actions and decisions. As Kier identifies, "Organizational cultures define what is a problem and what is possible by focusing its members attention on certain features of events, institutions, and behaviors; how a problem is defined determines the range of possible solutions and strategies appropriate for solving it".[57] Military organizations have strong cultures due to their focus on long-term membership and powerful indoctrination techniques.[58]

According to Organizational Theory: 1) organizations lose capability due to the necessary simplicity of SOPs; 2) SOPs limit options to given circumstances; 3) change is incremental and cannot occur quickly; 4) individuals within organizations have limited information and must perform standard actions without complete knowledge or understanding; and 5) implementation or output may not match desired outcome or decisions.[59]

1. Applying Organizational Theory to Issues Identified

One of the most difficult endeavors that a large organization can face is reacting to a new environment. As Machiavelli noted, "there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things".[60] In most organizational theory, most debate centers on defining issues that can be considered causal to change, or whether a certain variable can be considered necessary or sufficient to explain change in an organization. Debate also exists in how individuals act as change agents in military organizations, whether it happens through civilian

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[56] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 28.

[57] Kier, 28.

[58] Kier, 28.

[59] Allison and Zelikow.

[60] Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1.

direction, top-down guidance, bottom-up learning, the effect of "military mavericks" [61], or the effect of defeat and the subsequent acceptance of a need to change. Most agree that change will not occur until the organization itself "buys in" to the need for change.

At the tactical level, this can be an exasperating situation. It is frustrating to know a certain method of accomplishing a given task is expected even when all evidence available to the tactical leader has demonstrated that an innovative technique to accomplishing the overall objective is available but outside the bounds existing standard operating procedures or measures of effectiveness established. It becomes even more difficult to accept given the lip service senior officers and officials often give to the need to embrace change and innovation to enable success in the GWOT.[62]

a. Organizational Behavior Theory on Innovation as an Explanation

According to Stephen Rosen, "Peacetime innovation has been possible when senior military officers with traditional credentials…have acted to create a new promotion pathway for junior officers practicing a new way of war. Wartime innovation…has been most effective when associated with a redefinition of the measures of effectiveness employed by the military organization".[63]

Some author's question Rosen's work because it lacks appreciation for the effect of organizational culture on innovation and because his argument is somewhat tautological. In other words, the Army does not change because it is resistant to change, as provided from Deborah Avant of Rosen, "Principally military organizations are resistant to change".[64] Rosen's primary contribution is his identification of the key aspects that facilitate change in war. Rosen's primary factor for change in wartime is the need to redefine our "measures of effectiveness." He identifies an important distinction

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[61]Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 5.

[62] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative", *Strategic Studies Institute* (September 2003), 1.

[63] Rosen, 251.

[64] Avant, 15.

must be made between a major innovation and tactical innovation. "A major innovation involves change in the concepts of operation of that combat arm. That is, the ideas governing the ways it uses its force to win a campaign, as opposed to a tactical innovation, which is a change in the way individual weapons are applied to the target and environment in battle."[65] He also challenges the notion that, "The general idea that war provides the necessary environment for military learning and innovation is widespread."[66] He warns, "there are so many examples of military organizations that have been unable, for whatever reason, to learn from wartime experience that we are forced to be cautious in assuming that innovation during wartime is a straightforward matter of observing what works and what does not work in combat."[67] And adds that an answer to innovation in the military must begin with "an examination of the ways in which the military organizations collect and use information".[68]

Rosen notes that militaries find it difficult to innovate when "a new wartime problem occurs that falls outside the parameters of established missions and concepts of operations". He relates this to how, "A thermostat has the overall goal of keeping a room's temperature comfortable, but will not provide any data about the need to dehumidify air in the room. So, too, existing military intelligence and administrative routines may not suggest the need for or value of innovation."[69]

Rosen's identifies the specific reasons why the Army usually fails to innovate in combat, "When military innovation is required in wartime, however, it is because an inappropriate strategic goal is being pursued, or because the relationship between military operations and that goal has been misunderstood. The old ways of war

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[65] Rosen, 7.

[66] Rosen, 23.

[67] Rosen, 24.

[68] Rosen, 29.

[69] Rosen, 34.

are employed, but no matter how well, the war is not being won. A new strategic goal must be selected and a new relationship between military operations and that goal must be defined."[70]

Rosen can account for three of the four factors identified in this study that influenced the Army's choice to use a counter-terror strategy. Factor #1, was that Army officers were slow to accept that they lacked appropriate doctrine. In accordance with the theory this would be expected of an organization such as the Army. Also, the theory identifies that change would require a redefinition of goals to adapt to wartime tasks, but the Army lacked measures of effectiveness to identify the fact that existing practices were failing. It also explains why we assumed we should use large bases (Factor #2) and why we managed our personnel poorly by adhering to SOPs in personnel matters and tactics (Factor #3).

b.   *Organizational Culture Theory as an Explanation*

For addressing this area of theory Elizabeth Kier has been selected. She, "challenges the conventional wisdom about the origins of offensive and defensive military doctrine by arguing that military doctrine is best understood from a cultural perspective".[71] Kier's primary contribution to this study is identifying that, "the military's culture intervenes between civilian decisions and military doctrine".[72] In response to perceived threats to an organization's culture it may circle the wagons. "As the culture tightens, established methods and ideas become further entrenched and organization becomes increasingly unable to consider alternatives…strong cultures inhibit timely and innovative reactions."[73] Her work examines, "the ways in which officers' beliefs and values (their organizational culture) influences their assessment of incoming information, their definition of the situation, and their identification and

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[70] Rosen, 35.

[71] Kier, 40.

[72] Kier, 5.

[73] Kier, 32.

valuation of options, as well as their choice of a course of action. In short, it becomes easier to connect the phases of the policy process and to identify the reasons a particular doctrine was adopted."[74]

Her strongest contribution, to this study, is the establishment of culture's causal autonomy, "One of the ways of doing this is to show that the actor's beliefs persist despite the fact that continuing to hold to those beliefs keeps them from achieving other important goals."[75] She also states the applicability of this model for wartime, "if there is any time an adversary (or external environment) should matter, it is during war. Examining wartime doctrinal change would either show the limits of this study's argument or make an even stronger case for the explanatory power of military culture."[76]

An interesting analogy the author makes of military culture is its description as a double-edged sword, "On the one hand, the consistency of beliefs in total institutions like the military means that most of its members have difficulty imagining that things could or should be done differently. On the other hand, the military's powerful assimilating mechanisms mean that once an organization gets behind an initiative to change aspects of its culture, change may be more feasible."[77] She also provides a useful warning to those speculating why the military is offensive minded. "Policy makers should… recognize that military resistance to defensive doctrines may not stem from the officer corps' attempt to protect the offensive doctrine itself. It may not be the offensive aspect of the doctrine that the military seeks to safeguard, but instead components within its organizational culture that they believe are integral to the successful implementation of their mission. If defensive doctrines could be designed to incorporate those components of the military's culture, then military resistance to the change would decrease."[78]

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[74] Kier, 34.

[75] Kier, 37.

[76] Kier, 157.

[77] Kier, 161.

[78] Kier, 163.

This theory provides explanatory power to why the Army struggled to change once it was clear to most that the strategy and tactics were not effective. The idea of the Army culture "constricting" to limit options available has been demonstrated in this study to be very applicable to tactical leaders attempting to propose new approaches. Additionally, the reason we persisted for so long with an offensive approach to the war was from a heart felt belief that it was the appropriate method to win.

Kier's theory provides great insight into why the Army persisted with an offensive approach to the war in Iraq. It provides evidence of why, even when directed to embrace counterinsurgency, the Army continued to define success in terms of the offense. This offensive mind set has been evidenced many times in this study. The offensive spirit is the intervening variable between civilian direction to change and change actually occurring.

Kier also provides insight into why the Army did not use the best weapons for the job. The organizational culture was set to use the tools in which it was familiar. Applying tools outside of the comfort zone can be identified as "threats" to core doctrine and tactics. These perceived threats caused military leaders to become even more resistant to change and to use a selective approach to the missions on which they chose to focus. Additionally, organizational theory, in general, provides that the Army would be resistant to using non-traditional methods out of concern that it would erode the traditional culture. Another issue that inhibited change was the hierarchical command structure. A mission command structure or flatter leadership approach would have been more conducive to innovation. FM 3-24 identifies the need in a counterinsurgency environment for delegation of authority to the lowest level possible.[79] Responsibility for an activity was delegated but not the authority for the resources and assets that could actually facilitate the goals desired. By "holding the reins" of authority, senior officers restricted lower level leaders ability to solve new problems.

Organizational culture also provides insight into why lower level commanders in Iraq were experiencing task overload. This can be explained by the "can

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[79] Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* Headquarters Department of the Army and Marine Corps, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

do" attitude that exists in the Army. Although quality leaders are expected to acknowledge when they can not accomplish tasks, they rarely will. The more preferred and expected response is for the subordinate to reorganize or work harder to facilitate the tasks being asked of them. Also, companies and platoons typically had all they could handle with daily patrols and requirements. Once additional requirements associated with surge operations or priority missions were added, daily duties often did not get the priority they deserved. This "can do" attitude has existed within the Army culture for years. Within a garrison environment this attitude is not a problem but when applied to a combat environment it can be counterproductive.

Organizational culture also helps to explain other causal factors behind the Army's decision to choose a counter-terror strategy. Part of the Army way of war is the belief that military operations can and should be fought in a manner that produces the least friendly casualties. This approach is not a problem until the need for force protection starts to override mission effectiveness. This problem can be identified as a primary reason for the use of large bases. The majority of commanders were more concerned with ensuring casualties were kept to a minimum, which was supported by an Army culture that had come to embrace survivability as a primary variable in strategy formulation.

c.   *Risk Aversion as an Explanation*

Prospect theory is, "an alternative theory of choice under conditions of risk….people evaluate choices with respect to gains and losses from a reference point. They tend to overweight losses with respect to comparable gains and engage in risk-averse behavior with respect to gains and risk-acceptant behavior with respect to losses".[80] This theory provides a great deal to understand the choices made by the Army. According to Rosen, "A major innovation is, by definition, unprecedented. Even if that innovation takes place in wartime, there will not have been much relevant previous

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[80] Jack S. Levy, "Application of Prospect Theory to Political Science," *Synthese.* Dordrecht: Vol. 135, Iss. 2 (May 2003): 1.

experience. The lack of precedent makes wartime innovation risky, and with risk often comes justified aversion."[81]

Take for example the Army's approach to Anbar province in comparison to Baghdad during the 2005-2006 timeframe. For Anbar, it was clearly acknowledged that this area was in the realm of losses for the U.S. For Baghdad, it had largely been considered to have had some level of gains throughout 2004-2005 and could thus be thought of in the realm of gains. For Anbar, it was not until it was assumed irretrievably lost to Al-Qaeda influence that a risky and innovative approach was embraced. For Baghdad, it was not until complete civil unrest (ignited by the Samarra bombing) that risky or innovative approaches were entertained. In both, we can see that while the operation was in the realm of gains, the Army would not consider more risky tactics and approaches. But once in the realm of losses, more risky and ultimately successful approaches were approved, used, and indoctrinated.

This adds explanatory power to why the Army was very reluctant to embrace change or more risk during the 2004-2005 timeframe in Iraq. In large measure the Army was in the realm of gains. It had facilitated a successful election in January 2005, a successful Constitutional referendum in October 2005, and another successful election in December 2005. From the view point of U.S. military commanders, to risk those gains by embracing risky and innovative approaches would have been unthinkable.

At the individual or small unit level it explains the typical performance of company level units and leaders in Iraq. Many leaders were prone to be risk-averse. This is expected, under this theory, if offensive tactics can provide the small measure of success to allow them into the realm of gains (i.e. capturing or killing suspected enemy fighters). Once leaders identify themselves in the realm of gains, efforts cease to increase gains and efforts shift to maintaining them. This explains why tactical commanders were prone to focus on force protection and to avoid using more risky techniques on the ground. Quite simply they had had success and all that was left to be done was to

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[81] Rosen, 25.

complete a tour losing as few men as possible, thus protecting the level of gain for the deployment as a whole.

This theory also explains why some company-level leader were averse to finding innovative solutions in that the mere assignment of a maneuver branch officer as a company commander in combat is highly coveted, even more so to have a successful review by his higher commanders. To receive a positive evaluation, assimilation with the culture is expected. Therefore, by virtue of their position, company-level leaders can feel they are in the realm of gains by being assigned to their position and echoing the approach of their higher commanders. To embrace risky and innovative approaches can only be seen in the realm of gains if that is an output higher commanders have deemed necessary for success. It has been shown that innovation outside of the parameters set by the culture of the Army was not desired or rewarded, thus cannot be considered in the realm of gains.

B.   CONCLUSION

Organizational theorists have provided much in the way of explanatory and predictive theories concerning why the military will or will not embrace change or innovation in tactics to respond to an unfamiliar environment or task. This chapter has evidenced three theories (Organizational Behavior Theory, Organizational Culture Theory, and Prospect Theory) that not only provide explanation to why the Army did not, or was slow to, change in response to an unfamiliar task in Iraq, but also could have predicted that this would have occurred. Evidence in this study has shown that many in the Army had knowledge of these theories and had identified the need for the Army to change.[82]   However, the inhibitor to change has been the universal acceptance of new doctrine and possibly a new definition of the Army's culture. This study has also identified that the primary source of the inhibition to change has been at the battalion and brigade level of command, based on organizational behavior and cultural theory; with an

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[82] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative", *Strategic Studies Institute*, (September 2003).

added inhibition at the company level and below because of an aversion to professional risk and out of a need to mesh with the accepted culture of Army in order to be successful.

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VI.   CONCLUSION

A.   CONCLUSIONS OF THIS STUDY

The central aim of this study was to understand why tactical level leaders chose an inappropriate strategy to apply to the problem set given in Iraq in the 2004-2005 timeframe. To understand the context and content of the decisions made, empirical (experiences of the author and others) and normative (applicable academic theories) evidence was provided to form a complete answer. This study has shown that although detailed and effective counterinsurgency strategy exists today, in 2004-2005, this doctrine was in its infancy (in the Army) and not well understood or accepted by leaders at all levels in the Army. Because of this fact, the highest level military leaders effectively left the choice of doctrine applied at the tactical level solely in the hands of mid-level leaders, Battalion and Brigade Commanders. In many instances, this resulted in Battalion and Brigade Commanders choosing doctrine that was more familiar to them and more oriented towards the Army's traditional form of warfare. Though these Commanders believed they were executing a counterinsurgency strategy, this study has shown that many units employed a strategy that could be better described as a counter-terror strategy.

Due to this uneven application of doctrine all units were not unified in their approach to this conflict, many units using a counter-terror strategy contributed to a lack of unity of effort of U.S. forces, and actions of units violated most of the tenets established in effective counterinsurgency theory and practice. This study has shown how and why the Army did not understand how their tactical level actions and strategy would contribute to and facilitate the operational and strategic goals for Iraq. Many units employed a counter-terror strategy that focused on finding/killing/capturing named terrorist actors rather than focusing on interdicting the more powerful tool of the insurgent, his ideology. The Army did not adequately appreciate or employ the actions necessary to establish and maintain our legitimacy and additionally did not appreciate the necessity to transition authority and responsibility for security, economic, and political

functions in a speedy manner to the host-nation. The Army did a poor job of establishing the correct measures of effectives to guide our ability to adapt and to facilitate a long term commitment to the mission. Additionally, Army leaders were prone to believe that all missions could be accomplished on their watch; therefore leaders were prone to pursue actions and measures of effectiveness that focused on short-term demonstrations of success rather than long-term contributions to a successful operational design.

To provide many of "why" type answers to the selection of strategy by leaders, this study has shown that organizational theory provides a wealth of insight into how organizations and those acting within one, make decisions and innovate. This study applied theories provided by various authors that give explanatory power to why the U.S. Army: Did not have established doctrine that was appropriate to conducting Counterinsurgency operations by conventional units. This was because organizations are slow to learn and adapt to unfamiliar environments; Remained focused on using offensive tactics to achieve success. This was because the culture of an organization has great influence on how organizations choose to approach problem solving.

Since the U.S. Army highly prized and rewarded an offensive spirit, this influenced the types of tactics that were deemed appropriate to the problem set given. The Army remained wedded to a large Forward Operating Base mindset. This was because organizations will remain committed to standard operating procedures even when they have stopped being effective. Large organizations must use standard operating procedures in order to function effectively; however, once a standard operating procedure is established and supported it stops being connected to the original cause it was created to accomplish and becomes a means unto itself. The Army did not have the right leadership or manage leadership effectively. This was because the culture of an organization will tend to promote leaders and identify measures of success of leaders that are related to the culture and circumstances that created the highest level leaders not necessarily the attributes that are most effective and applicable to the current requirements of the organization.

Additionally, several factors were identified and explained that contributed to the inability of the U.S. Army to adapt effectively once engaged in the conflict in Iraq. The

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lowest level tactical commanders were often reluctant or inhibited in their ability to find and spread innovative solutions to the new problems presented to them in Iraq. This was because individuals and organizations will become risk averse once in the realm of relative gains and only risk taking when in the realm of relative loses. The U.S. Army poorly used the most effective tools for a counterinsurgency, namely monetary means. This is because administrative bureaucracy and its expected delays and ineffectiveness are indicative of large organizations. This did not mesh with the absolute need in Iraq for the lowest level leaders to have flexibility in application of the most effective weapons. In a counterinsurgency, the most effective weapons do not shoot and in Iraq the lowest level leaders could only control one weapon--the ones that did shoot. Senior officers did not mitigate or correctly address the effects of task overload on the lowest level tactical units. This prompted units to employ satisfying techniques in order to meet the unrealistic demands and thus rarely continued to pursue the most effective solutions to problems experienced.

What this study suggests overall is that the Army tried to use old techniques and ideas to solve a problem that was known to be new and required innovation to deal with. There is no debate as to whether there exists a need in the Army to change to meet the requirements of winning in Iraq. The only debate that exists is whether or not the United States should involve itself in conflicts that are not winnable by means of a high-intensity conflict. What is evident from this study is that resistance to innovation was present in the Army during the 2004-2005 timeframe, what is not completely clear is what the motivations were for doing so. This study has shown that a primary inhibitor to change in Iraq was the mid-level commanders stationed between those giving the guidance and doctrine and those having to execute it on the ground. This study has demonstrated that innovation is almost always occurring at the lowest levels, if this is a measure of effectiveness of the commanders above them. The true conduit for organizational change then becomes the recognition of effective measures at the lowest level by the Battalion and Brigade levels of command. Without this recognition change will not spread and be "learned" by the organization.

As addressed at the beginning of this study victory in a conflict requires properly understanding yourself, your enemy, and the fight you will encounter. In at the least the first and third point this study has shown that the Army was deficient in its preparation for the Iraq War in 2004-2005. Therefore, gaining a true understanding of U.S. Army capabilities and a clear picture of how a Counterinsurgency should be executed is of utmost relevance to the United States who needs to win in Iraq and will likely face similar conflicts in the future.

B.   IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the Army must have a defined doctrine and training regiment to address counterinsurgency as a mission. Since much literature and doctrine for the Army has been developed in the course of the last year, it would appear that the Army as an organization has embraced the need for understanding and executing a counterinsurgency mission. The recent successes in Iraq corroborate that current leadership in the Army assigned to Iraq is better trained and equipped to execute the mission assigned. The question that remains is whether this embracing of counterinsurgency will be a replaying of how the Army responded to the need to address counterinsurgency in response to the Vietnam War or will the Army truly embrace counterinsurgency as a core competency? This question is unanswerable at this time as written information and more importantly the personal substantiation of those within the Army organization is not available at this time. This question will undoubtedly be a topic of many future studies.

An implication of this study that can be addressed is the need of greater scrutiny and diligence in assignment and evaluation of company through brigade commanders. Specifically, the Army needs to find a way to identify leaders that have attributes to be effective in a counterinsurgency environment and then needs to keep those identified as effective counterinsurgency commanders in position for longer periods of time in Iraq and similar conflicts. A fundamental constraint to this would be the belief in the Army that it can create leaders and that the Army can train anyone to perform well in any form of warfare. Most historical literature discounts this notion yet the Army seems wedded to

it. Most information that the Army has published on how it will transform, identifies the transformation of the way that leaders think as a primary variable to the future success of the Army.[83] However, little has been changed in the Army to weed out those that refuse or are unable to change their manner of thinking. Additionally, few senior commanders are emplacing programs or incentives that encourage the transformation of thinking that is necessary for success in the future. A new formalized evaluation system that incorporates the input from more than two superior leaders is what is needed in the Army to facilitate change.

Colonel Steven Jones describes a 360 degree evaluation system that incorporates the input from peers and subordinates as well as superior officers in the evaluation of commanders.[84] This type of evaluation system would ensure that the types of changes that are widely accepted by the military would necessarily have to be displayed by commanders at all levels in order to have professional success. Under the current system that is not necessarily the case, rather a commander only has to execute within the measures of effectiveness of his two superior commanders. Thus, even when most recognize a new tactic or technique is necessitated, if higher levels of command do not agree, mid-level commanders are inclined to side with their raters' opinion.

The last implication of this study is that having the same forces train for counterinsurgency and maneuver warfare may not be the most efficient or effective method to address either form of warfare. Counterinsurgency warfare necessitates fundamentally different training methods, equipment, and key leadership traits in leaders than maneuver warfare. Therefore it would seem most effective to have separately manned, trained, and equipped forces to address each form of warfare. This study has demonstrated that it took the Army nearly three years to adapt to a counterinsurgency fight. How long would it now take the Army to adapt to a different type conflict? Likely not very long as most of those in positions of leadership in the Army have experience in maneuver warfare and could easily revert back. The larger question is whether or not it is

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[83] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative", *Strategic Studies Institute*, (September 2003).

[84] Jones, 28.

important enough to the Army, and United States, for the Army to be able to successfully execute a counterinsurgency mission with conventional forces? If yes to both then the Army must establish a means to institutionalize counterinsurgency warfare as a core competency of at least a portion of its forces as a primary mission.   Having counterinsurgency as a subset mission of Full-Spectrum Operations will not work long-term as once the Army leaves Iraq effectively training leaders and soldiers in counterinsurgency warfare will become nearly impossible and the Army will once again revert to our preferred forms of offensive warfare. Or the Army will try to train both at the same time and the result will be mediocrity in execution of both forms of warfare. If being able to successfully execute counterinsurgency, with conventional Army units, is not important enough to institutionalize as a primary mission for at least a portion of the Army's force, than future U.S. Administrations should strictly adhere to the tenets set forth in the Powell Doctrine.

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